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Melanie Mattson-Maniekee

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Dr. Edward Kim, Committee Member, Education Faculty

Dr. Cathryn White, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer

Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2018

Abstract

Declining Enrollment Among Extra School Time Programs for Adult Students

by

Melanie Maniekee

MA, University of Wisconsin Superior, 2004

BFA, University of Wisconsin Superior, 2001

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

February 2018

Abstract

In a Midwest school district, school personnel and students are concerned that the Extra School Time (EST) program student enrollment is declining. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore teacher, administrator, and adult age student perceptions to gain a deeper understanding of the problem leading to declining enrollment in the EST program. Using Lewin's holistic model of systemic leadership and evaluation of programs, teachers', students' and administrators' perceptions of factors, processes for support, curriculum needs, and actions to improve implementation of the EST program were explored. Using a qualitative case study, data were collected via semi-structured interviews and a survey of 9 purposefully sampled participants. Sampling criteria included being a current or former adult age student who attended the EST program, current EST teacher, and EST administrators. Data from semi-structured interviews and surveys were triangulated and analyzed using inductive and comparative coding, and a constant comparative analysis method. Emerging themes were coded using axial coding. Six themes emerged: lack of child care, transportation, work conflict with class attendance, convenience of times classes were offered, and offering courses that were relevant to the student. A 24-hour faculty professional development program was developed to educate EST faculty and staff on the issues influencing declining EST enrollment and develop strategies and actions to improve implementation of the EST program by addressing student and teacher needs. Positive social change from this study may include increased graduation rates, meaningful employment for EST participants, college entrance, and employment growth for the local community.

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Dedication

For Willie.

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Table 1: Enrollment in EST Courses From 2009-2014 by Site

Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

An independent school district, located in an upper Midwest state, is the home to nine elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools; it also houses the Community Education (CE) program, serving approximately 8,000 students (Independent School District, 2015). The CE program is a fee-based program that offers courses to community members, which includes at-risk students. Each semester, approximately 2,000 students are enrolled in over 100 CE courses (Stanford Business Software Inc., 2012). Out of this enrollment, 15% of the students are enrolled in the Extra School Time (EST) program (SBSI, 2012). Typical courses include College Transition, English as a Second Language, General Educational Development (GED) certification, Adult Basic Education, Project Access (a program designed for adults with disabilities and special needs), and EST. EST is a voluntary enrollment program intended to help adult students gain basic educational skills, graduate on time, gain college entrance, and build confidence and social skills to enhance and enrich their educational experience (Independent School District, 2015).

The importance of CE courses and educational programming, specifically EST programming in this community, is that it offers courses in basic skills and programs designed for at-risk students, low socioeconomic status (SES), and community members who wish to pursue higher education. The EST courses offered help participants develop basic educational skills and social skills; in addition, these courses provide participants

the opportunities to experience higher education (Independent School District, 2015).

Through these courses, students will ultimately be prepared to contribute to the local and national workforce and gain confidence to further contribute to society and attain personal satisfaction intellectually, physically, and emotionally (Deschenes, Lee, Little, Malone, & Weiss, 2013).

The content for Section 1 includes the issue of declining enrollment among EST programs, effects on the national level, which include lack of qualified workers in the workforce, as nationwide employers are in search of employees who are adequately trained in the job requirements employers are seeking, the effects cancellation of EST programming may have on local and national communities, and the current enrollment patterns of EST courses.

Definition of the Problem

In the local district, school personnel and students are concerned that EST program student enrollment is declining and may not continue to be available for students as an educational option that has facilitated basic learning skills through low-cost courses (Personal communication from EST administrator, 2014). Since 2009, EST educational programming enrollment has declined in all six courses (SBSI, 2012), see Table 1. This problem has negatively impacted EST participants because they are not adequately prepared for graduation and college entrance (D. Jackson, personal communication, September 3, 2015). I concluded that a qualitative case study would be the most appropriate research design to obtain data on teacher, administrator, and adult age student

perceptions of the problem of declining enrollment in the EST program. This study would provide a deeper understanding of teacher, administrator, and adult student perceptions of factors impacting the decline in the EST student enrollment and course offerings, thereby providing suggestions to support the increased enrollment and continuation of the EST program for adult aged students.

Problem and the Larger Population

If enrollment continues to decline, EST may not be able to continue programming, which may affect the larger population (Yukech, 2012). Yukech also indicated that two-thirds of open jobs require an education beyond high school, and students who are not educationally prepared to enter college or are not able to reach college graduation miss out on being eligible for a large portion of available jobs (2012). Without an educated workforce pool, employers will face a shortage of qualified workers (Berg, 2016).

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem From the Local Setting

There has been declining enrollment in CE courses; the enrollment has decreased by 3,000 students over the last decade (Independent School District, 2015). EST programming provides a much needed extra educational support to enable adults to pursue degrees and training that they might not otherwise pursue (Independent School District, 2015). In 2001, CE provided services to 80% of the total school population; in 2011, CE provided services to 74% of the total school population.

EST courses create and offer programs designed to decrease the educational gap by supplementing the school-district curriculum (D. Jackson, personal communication, May 1, 2015). Courses in mathematics, science, and reading help students who need additional academic support help, but many students do not have access to them through their school district (Kosiewicz, Ngo, & Fong, 2016). The opportunities EST offers students are endless, as they gather skills—social and educational—and build confidence that will be used throughout their lives as they further their lives and careers (D. Jackson, personal communication, May 1, 2015).

Without EST classes, students in the region may not have affordable access to classes that teach basic skills and provide guidance and support in areas such as college entrance, life skills, social skills, test taking, educational skills at age-appropriate levels, and employment skills. Evidence from the Independent School District (2015) indicated that local high schools offer remedial courses in mathematics, science, and English; however, the timing of these courses often does not align with graduation timelines. Students sometimes fall behind while taking remedial courses because they still need to take the grade-level courses after completion of the remedial courses. A student who needs to take three remedial courses becomes one-half semester behind students who do not need remedial courses. A Midwest school administrator suggested that the data collected from this study may help EST to continue offering educational programs that may help reduce the number of students who fall behind target grade levels (B. Johnson, personal communication, September 1st, 2011). Over time, if EST programs are

cancelled, this region may have students leaving high school who lack basic education skills in mathematics, science, and reading. This could delay college entrance and the ability to secure and maintain sustainable employment, which would provide financial support without the need for governmental assistance (Education and Workforce Policy, 2012). Many students enrolled in the EST programs lack guidance and support from their home life and rely on EST programming to help them succeed (personal communication, May 1, 2015). Researchers have advocated that programs like EST contribute to economic growth because much of the course content is focused on preparing participants to be self-sufficient, contributing members of their community (Deschenes et al., 2013; National Center on Education and the Economy [NCEE], 2012). The findings from these sources indicate the importance of preparing students to be productive community members and provide additional support for the need to learn more about the declining enrollment in the EST program. These types of courses could prepare students to fill employment vacancies as skilled workers, support themselves and their families, and even potentially reduce the strain on public assistance (Lee, 2012). Without this study, the enrollment in EST programming may continue to decline, causing program cancellation (B. Johnson, personal communication, October 10, 2015). When I began this study, it was unknown why the enrollment was declining. Table 1 shows the enrollment in EST courses from 2009 to 2014.

Table 1*Student Enrollment in EST Courses From 2009-2014 by Site*

EST	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
School sites	Students enrolled	Students enrolled	Students enrolled	Students enrolled	Students enrolled	Students enrolled
Site 1	33	31	28	23	23	21
Site 2	42	42	37	35	30	26
Site 3	56	52	51	42	40	37
Site 4	27	27	25	23	22	20
Site 5	42	41	37	32	29	17
Site 6	20	19	15	11	12	7

Note. SBSI Software, 2012 [Computer software]. Farmington Hills, MI. SBSI 2014

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

Developing individuals who are capable of supporting their families and themselves is a key component to creating communities with strong, sustainable workforces. The NCEE (2012) indicated that there needs to be a reform in education because the nation's workforce has an increasing abundance of both under skilled and low-skilled workers who are without high school diplomas and would benefit from further education and educational programming that would help them be employed in a family sustaining career. Additional research has been conducted in large cities across the

United States, suggesting the need for and benefits of Out of School Time (OST) programming for students (Harvard Family Research Project, 2013).

Without employable skills, such as a high school diploma, GED, or college degree, workers who do not earn enough to sustain themselves create further need for government assistance, increasing the drain on community resources, such as subsidized housing, food, financial, and medical assistance. The problem is not a lack of jobs; there is a lack of skilled workers. Skilled workers can be defined as having more than a basic education, such as a college degree or advanced training in a skilled trade such as nursing, welding, or computing (Whittaker, 2016). By educating students and preparing them for graduation and college, EST is helping supply the workforce with skilled workers and decreasing the need for government assistance (Johnson & Stephens, 2012).

By working together to provide quality basic skills instruction to students, EST instructors show a commitment to education and student success in areas of basic skills education (B. Johnson, personal communication, October 5, 2016). By interacting with one another and developing oneself through education, EST, as a holistic model, provides an opportunity for quality education for students who are searching to find their place in society. Through personal work with students and daily observations, an EST instructor noted, “Students who are involved in EST tend to know the importance of their experiences and the relevance of course work they need to succeed. The students know that they are valued and have the capabilities to achieve their goals” (D. Jackson, personal communication, November 18, 2012). EST works in unity to supplement the

educational goals of the school district, building on the core teachings of the school curriculum to help students build a stronger educational foundation in which they can grow and achieve success.

The focus of this study was on teacher, administrator, and adult age student perceptions on declining enrollment among EST programming. The purpose of the study was to gain a deeper understanding of the problem of declining enrollment in the EST program and the factors leading to declining enrollment in the EST program in order to address the concerns and close the gap in practice. Literature from NCEE (2012) suggested a need for basic skills education, such as the courses offered by the EST program in the study.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were defined in the context of this study:

ACCUPLACER: A suite of tests that quickly, accurately, and efficiently assess reading, writing, mathematics, and computer skills (College Board, 2013).

Achievement gap: The observed, persistent disparity shown through educational measures such as standardized tests, grade-point averages, and dropout rates between the performance of groups of students, especially groups defined by socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, and gender (School Wise Press, 2008).

Adult aged students: Students aged 18 years and older (School Wise Press, 2008).

Adult basic education: Instruction in basic skills, such as reading, writing, arithmetic, and other skills required to function in societies, offered to persons 18 years of

age or older. Adult basic education may include any subject normally offered in the basic curricula of an accredited elementary or secondary school in the state (School Wise Press, 2008).

At-risk students: Students who have one or more of the following characteristics: low SES, from a single parent family, an older sibling dropped out of school, have changed schools two or more times, had average grades of “C” or lower from sixth to eighth grade, or have repeated a grade (Bulger & Watson, 2006).

Community Education (CE): CE is an opportunity for local citizens, community schools, agencies, and institutions to become active partners in addressing education and community concerns. CE embraces the following beliefs: education is a lifelong process, everyone in the community shares a responsibility for the mission of educating all members of the community, and citizens have a right and responsibility to link needs to resources to improve their community (Independent School District, 2015).

Community members: In this study, any individual who lives in the geographic area of the northern community and surrounding areas for any period of time.

Employable skills: Employable skills are transferable core skill groups that represent essential functional and enabling knowledge, skills, and attitudes required in the 21st-century workplace. Employable skills are necessary for career success at all levels of employment and for all levels of education (Overtoom, 2000).

English as a second language: The use or study of English by speakers with different native languages (School Wise Press, 2008).

Extra school time (EST): OST programming offered to students who need additional educational help to keep them on track for graduation and college entrance. Programs are offered in mathematics, reading, and science. Program fees are \$150 per month, and courses are offered Monday through Friday, before and after school.

General educational development (GED): The GED test is designed for people who did not graduate from high school but want a certificate equivalent to the traditional high school diploma. The examination tests knowledge in five subject areas: language arts, writing; language arts, reading; mathematics; science; and social studies (School Wise Press, 2008).

Labor union: Labor unions are an organization of workers formed to protect the rights and interests of its members (Boundless, 2013).

Low-skilled/skilled workers: Low-skilled workers are typically defined as those acquiring a high school education and often include persons with less than a high school diploma. A skilled worker is one who has an education beyond high school (Hoynes, 1999).

Out of school time (OST): Programming offered before and after school as a means to keep students engaged in education, aiming to improve educational and social-skills (School Wise Press, 2008).

Socioeconomic status (SES): An economic and sociological combined measure of a person's work experience and an individual's or family's economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education, and occupation. Individuals may be

categorized as having a SES in one of three categories: high SES, middle SES, and low SES (School Wise Press, 2008).

Significance of the Study

Significance to the Local Setting

This is a significant local problem for this region because EST programming is the only program offered on school sites that has courses designed to help students graduate from high school and enroll in the local community college (LCC), the only community college located in this region. Although LCC has classes to prepare students for enrollment in their chosen majors, the cost of the remedial courses are almost three times the cost of EST courses, and students who wish to attend LCC and are in need of remedial courses are not able to enter their program of choice until they pass the required remedial courses. The cost for three remedial courses at LCC is \$1,767.00 per four month semester (LCC, 2015); in comparison, a 4-month semester at EST costs \$600 (SBSI, 2012). The benefits of EST programming include reduced cost and one set time when students meet for help with all of the remedial classes they need. Students who wish to enroll in the EST program are required to pay a monthly fee of \$150, which can be subsidized through EST grants offered to students who qualify financially (D. Jackson, September 3, 2015). These are benefits that may be helpful for students who lack transportation or need to work during daytime hours (Independent School District, 2015).

Significance of the Problem in the Larger Setting

If cancellation of the EST programming occurs, it may affect the preparation and availability of skilled workers for the region (Sharma, Oczkowski, & Hicks, 2017).

Problems for the community could include shortages of skilled healthcare workers, which could create a direct effect on the well-being of patients; shortages of manufacturing workers, which could slow revenue and growth; and shortages of construction workers, which could limit the growth and revitalization of communities (Whittaker, 2016).

Specifically, if the EST program cannot continue to offer supplemental programming or operate its programming at an affordable cost, students who wish to increase their chances of college graduation and attain the basic skills needed to pursue higher education will not be able to receive the training needed to do so (D. Jackson, personal communication, September 13, 2015). Without EST programming to help students needing additional academic support, local communities may be impacted by a workforce unable to meet expectations for positions in all types of work openings, including low-skilled and high-skilled available positions (NCEE, 2012).

Avoiding EST Program Cancellation. Declining enrollment is a serious issue for EST. If this trend continues, EST leadership may need to make difficult decisions regarding cancelling the programming. In addition, they may need to make decisions about course fees to retain teachers and to keep curriculum current in spite of declining enrollments. With an increase in course and programming prices, the educational programs for targeted students may become less accessible to students and community

members who are most in need, educationally and financially (SBSI Software, 2012).

These possible outcomes may deny the opportunity of advancement to those who need it and may gain the most benefit from it.

Another possible scenario is that EST may have to cancel the program entirely, which may also have a negative effect on students (D. Jackson, personal communication, May1, 2015). This scenario may leave community members without an affordable option for this type of educational programming. Declining enrollment, increased fees, and cancellation may have a direct effect on community members, leaving them without access to affordable, vital, educational opportunities granted through EST programming (Education and Workforce Policies, 2012).

Employers in the community may also feel the effects through a lack of skilled workers, which may have a direct effect on the basic needs of the community and its members. With increased shortages among skilled workers in technical fields (NCEE, 2012), it is increasingly important for community members to have access to programs that will prepare and enable them to gain further access to higher education in community and 4-year colleges.

Research Questions

In the previous sections, I provided information related to the need for OST education programming such as EST courses for community members who are trying to reach personal educational goals. These goals could be high school diploma; basic educational skills in mathematics, reading, and science; and admission to college.

Consequently, the recent decline in enrollment in the EST program is a concern at the study site. This concern about enrollment led to the following research question that guided this study.

To explore these perceptions, the focus of this study was on the central research question: What are the factors leading to declining enrollment in the EST program offered by CE as perceived by teachers and administrators? To further support the central question, there were four sub questions that were addressed:

1. What do EST teachers, students, and administrators perceive as factors that have influenced the enrollment issues in the CE program?
2. What supports, processes, or structures do teachers, students, and administrators perceive would better support and increase EST student enrollment?
3. What curriculum do teachers and administrators perceive as appropriate to support the needs of students enrolling in the EST program?
4. What actions do teachers, students, and administrators perceive should be taken to address the EST program issues?

Review of the Literature

The phenomenon that grounds this case study is declining enrollment that is occurring among EST programs. Students, particularly students from low SES backgrounds who participate in the EST program are in need of extra educational classes and resources to help them participate in a workforce that is continually growing and

changing. As students continue to mature, they may recognize the need for change and become proactive in their educational goals.

Conceptual Framework

Lewin's (1951) field theory focused on individuals living in a world with many forces operating around them; learning occurs when the needs of the individual change. Once a student or individual has identified that need for change, it becomes the role of the teacher to facilitate that process of change. When the educational process comes to the point of execution by teachers and courses, it is vital to have a working system of education that can provide the services and classes the student needs. Lewin (1946) also purported that educational institutions showed an increased sensitivity for offering a more realistic process of evaluation and self-evaluation, indicating a realization and need for the educational systems to be realistic in student outcomes and proactive in addressing the needs of the students. Lewin (1939) further stated, "Experimental psychology has shown that the formation of goals depends directly upon the laws which govern the level of aspiration, particularly upon the effect which success or failure has in raising and lowering the level of aspiration" (p. 869). The goal of EST is to reeducate students so that they are able to achieve educational goals and further their education. Lewin and Grabbe (1949) described reeducation as an individual who not only needs to learn a new set of skills but who also needs to acquire a new system of habits, standards, and values before he or she can function in the newly acquired role.

Accordingly, it would appear that Pittenger and Gooding (2005) proposed that “with a healthy organism, positive influences in the environment, and a nonrestrictive set of percepts of self, there would appear to be no foreseeable end to the possibilities for the individual” (p. 31). It is suggested that students need to have access to programs that grant them the opportunities to achieve their goals. When students have access to educational resources, they have the opportunity to participate in a lifetime of learning and endless possibilities. If students are involved in meaningful courses and feel validation, they have the potential to become the person they desire to be. Students who participate in the EST program have access to positive influences and the above-stated ideals, which can help them to achieve their educational goals. EST provides educational opportunities for students when they realize the need for change in their lives (Deschenes et al., 2013).

Conceptual Framework Connection to the Problem and Study. EST also works as a holistic model in the sense that it represents the world as an interacting, developing model where there is a search for unity between education and student achievement (Knowles et al., 2005). The unity between public school education and the EST courses offered from CE may be found in the collaboration of EST teachers and public-school teachers. As indicated in Lewin’s (1951) field theory, learning occurs when the needs of individuals change. The study of declining enrollment that is guided by the research question related to Lewin’s theory because this study addressed the needs of students and how they may be changing. As students mature and begin to reach

adulthood, they sense the need for changes in their lives to help them become contributing members of their community (Lewin, 1951). EST programs support the changing needs of students by offering educational courses that may help them to achieve goals of higher education and employment within their communities.

Review of the Broader Problem

Background on the broader problem included relevant literature on basic education and skills. Gap in practice, the importance of basic skills, socioeconomic factors, student assessment, global education, commitment to students, basic skills influence on the workforce, and lifelong learning are all documented effects of education systems that are failing students (Milner, 2013; Morante, 2017: & Saxon, 2014). The focus of some of the extant literature included content on the changing workforce, the need for basic skills and education among high school students, and the problems the students may have (Lee, 2012). Saturation for the literature review was achieved through the use of Boolean searches in multidisciplinary databases. Databases searched were ERIC, Education Research Complete, Sage Premiere, Education Research Starters, Academic Search Complete, and SocINDEX. In an effort to find related research, the terms *education*, *field theory*, *enrollment*, *community education*, *graduation rates*, and *minority education* were searched. Ultimately, the same themes and ideas were consistent throughout the literature review.

Gap in Practice

It is suggested that a gap exists in practice regarding research for basic-skills courses in this region (BLS, 2017). Previous research in basic-skills programming was primarily conducted in large urban areas (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2008; Martinez & Bain, 2014). Researchers advocated the importance of basic-skills courses and programming for students, the important impact community involvement and collaboration have on sustaining and improving those programs, and the effects of basic-skills education on the workforce (BLS, 2007; Garvey & Grobe, 2011). I further reviewed literature related to the community's involvement in helping the educational systems. The third component of the literature review addresses the benefits of basic-skills education and what it may offer the workforce as well as the effects unskilled workers may have on the workforce. The literature review offers insight into educational gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged students in communities, the importance of basic-skills courses for disadvantaged/targeted students, its role in postsecondary education, and the importance of having workers who are trained in their career fields working in communities. The literature review informs the reader of current educational practices and gaps, the importance of community involvement in schools, the effects of an underskilled workforce, and the importance of low-cost basic-skills courses such as EST.

The Importance of Basic Skills

Basic skills are the foundations of education and include the ability to read and write with comprehension and communicate successfully in a variety of ways and settings. They also include the understanding of core concepts of mathematics, sciences, civics and history, geography, arts, and health and fitness. Further, basic skills are the ability to think analytically, logically, and creatively; solve problems; understand the importance of work and finance; and discern how performance, effort, and decisions directly affect future career and educational opportunities (Washington State Legislature, 2013).

Many students who are entering college are unprepared academically for college-level courses. Students who gain entrance into college are finding they need to take remedial courses in mathematics, English, and science before they can enroll in these courses at a college level. The remedial courses not only add extra time for the students to complete a degree, they also come at an increased cost to the student, which may not be affordable and may deter a potential student when considering college enrollment. A recent national sample suggested that 1 in 5 students entering community college needed to take developmental coursework in their first year (Lu, 2013). Moreover, students who are entering college lack the basic skills for college-level work and are in need of supplemental courses before they can begin college-level coursework (Bailey & Jaggars, 2016). An estimated 86% of students entering community colleges need basic-skills education and are unprepared for college-level courses (Sutton, 2016). The high

percentage of underprepared and ill-prepared students is an indication that school systems are producing students who have not been adequately prepared for education outside of high school. Basic-educational skills are a key component of being prepared for college.

Being prepared for college and having the necessary educational skills are important indicators of whether a student will complete a college degree (Lu, 2013). A student receiving basic and social education prepares them with the skills and values needed to become an active participant in society (Smith, 2014). Social skills teach students how to interact with one another as peers and how to function and react as a member of society. When taught social skills, a student learns what is expected of them, and the continued interaction helps build confidence and self-esteem, both of which are key components of basic-skills training. Basic-skills programming is oftentimes the vital educational link that students need to unite them successfully with higher education institutions (Smith, 2014).

The statistics associated with underprepared students are increasing. Many colleges have used the Basic Skills Initiative (BSI), launched by the California community colleges in 2006 (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2008). The BSI was started as a project intended to address credit and noncredit skills courses as well as programs designed specifically to help students prepare educationally for college. The goal of the BSI was to create specific programming that targeted students who were not at the skill level they needed to be to enroll in college courses. Students who were falling behind or tested below their designated level were given access to

programs that would help teach and redirect them to gain the basic skills necessary for college entrance and completion (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2008).

The creation and implementation of the California BSI indicated the need for basic-skills programming nationwide. With 75% of the nation's college entrants underprepared (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2008), cities nationwide need programming aimed at targeted youth. Students who have access to basic skills programming and make use of these programs are provided educational opportunities that will have a positive impact on their lives and ultimately their communities.

Importance of EST in Larger Educational Setting

EST programming is important in the larger educational setting because fewer students are completing high school, and those who have completed high school are not equipped with the basic skills needed to successfully enter higher education institutions. Many students who are entering college for the first time will need remedial courses before they can begin college-level coursework (Hagedorn & Kuznetsova, 2016). EST programming helps prepare students to be sufficient in these courses before they enter college, oftentimes eliminating the need for remedial courses (D. Jackson, personal communication, September 13, 2015). NCEE (2012) indicated that this is an alarming problem the United States faces and confirmed the need for a study in the area of declining enrollment. These statistics suggest that the United States is the only highly

developed democracy where young adults are less likely to have completed high school than members of the previous generation (NCEE, 2012). More than 1 million students drop out of high school each year, and the U.S. workforce employs more than 12 million adults who do not have a high school diploma (DePaoli, Balfanz, & Bridgeland, 2016). Additionally, almost twice as many jobs over the next decade will require a postsecondary credential or college degree (NCEE, 2012). This number will increase from the current 25% to about 45% over the next decade. Currently, 93 million Americans score at the lower levels of national assessments of functional literacy skills and are unprepared to enroll in the postsecondary education or job-training programs that can prepare them for current and future jobs (NCEE, 2012).

Based on the information from the NCEE (2012), the significance of the problem of this study is further highlighted. The study of declining EST enrollment was necessary in addressing this problem because EST and similar community programs offer programming and courses designed specifically for those who are in need of additional educational aid that the school districts are unable to offer.

EST courses and programming is fee based; therefore, adequate enrollment is imperative to ensure courses may continue to be offered at an affordable cost to all community members. When enrollment declines to a level where it is not cost efficient to operate, courses may be cancelled, and community members may suffer the effects. Continuation of courses and programming may be of benefit to the immediate community

members and to any community that receives members from other communities into their workforce.

OST programming offers students the extra educational help they may need to obtain higher education and sustainable employment. The need for these skills is indicated in the NCEE report, which stated that “large parts of our workforce lack the basic skills employers need to build an internationally competitive economy” (NCEE, 2012, p. 5), and by World Education (2017), who reported that 30 million adults do not have either a high school diploma or the equivalent. Wagner (2014) identified that a large number of Americans who are above high school level are unable to read, write, or perform mathematics beyond an elementary school level.

The Harvard Family Research Project (2013) conducted a 2-year study of six sites that were developing OST programs. Studies were conducted in Chicago, New York City, Providence, San Francisco, and Washington DC. The findings suggested that OST programming has the potential to help students graduate, improve academic scores, promote development, and keep students safe. Further evidence indicated that the outcomes for youth who participate in OST programming can be rewarding and helpful to students’ social and academic careers; however, the limitations of OST programming are detailed in the information reported from the Harvard Family Research Project. One of the issues is the discrepancies surrounding what is considered having access to and actual participation in OST programs. Significant differences exist in participation among

subgroups of youth across a range of OST activities. This variation includes school-based and community-based afterschool programs, sports, and school clubs.

When in middle school and high school, youth are given more choices for participation in afterschool programs; many will select social activities, school extracurricular activities, or part-time employment over a community-based after-school education program. Researchers found that it is not merely participation in any OST program that matters, OST programs need to be of high quality and engaging to attract students and be educationally sound for youth to benefit from participation (Harvard Family Research Project, 2013). Finally, researchers have advocated that once enrolled, sustained participation is a key factor in achieving positive outcomes for youth (Harvard Family Research Project, 2013). Researchers suggested that students across the nation are educationally at risk and need the extra programs and support offered by OST programs so they may achieve graduation and college entrance (Harvard Family Research Project, 2013). OST programming needs to be engaging, enticing, and desirable to youth so youth continue to enroll, and participation may be sustained so students receive the maximum benefit from the program. It is important for the programming to be high quality so youth want to make the decision to attend OST programs over other activities that do not offer educational support. In this study, I explored teacher, administrator, and adult age student perceptions to gain a deeper understanding of the problem of declining enrollment in the EST program and the factors leading to declining enrollment in the EST program in order to address these concerns and close the gap in practice.

Socioeconomic Factors

Many students who are unprepared for college come from families with low incomes and live in areas where schools are not adequately funded (Wolniak, Wells, Engberg, & Manly, 2016). These schools lack vital resources such as text books, computers, current curriculum, and supplies. Classrooms in low-income areas are often overcrowded and lack enough seating for students. The northern area teachers and students report unrealistic student-to-teacher ratios. When teacher-to-student ratios are high, it becomes increasingly difficult for teachers to work individually with students who are struggling, if at all (WDIO.com, 2013).

When schools are not able to adequately prepare students for higher education, it falls on basic-skills programs to offer the programming needed to bring students to an adequate academic level. If community members cannot afford college-level basic-skills courses or basic-skills programming is unavailable, the entire community may be impacted due to a shortage of skilled workers. Additionally, those in the workforce who do not have adequate skills will remain at low wages, increasing the need for supplemental government help, and can cause a drain on cities resources and on taxpayers. As suggested by Lee (2012), “Unskilled redundant workers are typically reemployed in -‘bad jobs’—at low wages with weak worker protection rather than being given opportunities for training” (p. 5). This lack of training increases the chance that

workers will continue to be employed in consecutive low-paying jobs, thereby creating a never-ending cycle of under skilled workers.

Korn (2015) indicated students with the highest SES had a college graduation rate of 77%, whereas students with the lowest SES had the lowest graduation rate of 7%. The disparity between these rates is concerning, and significant evidence indicated that students of lower incomes need to have access to affordable programs designed to help them succeed (Bulger & Watson, 2006). Not only do students coming from the lower SES have a significantly low graduation rate, they also show a need for remedial courses in mathematics and science. Along with low-graduation rates, lower SES students are less likely to enroll in a concentration area that requires taking and passing three courses in a single field of study (Rowan-Kenyon, Blanchard, Reed, & Swan, 2016). It has also been implied that high schools with a lower performance have a tendency to graduate students who are inadequately prepared for postsecondary education (Gandara et al., 2012), adding to the number of underprepared students in college. Not only do the students leave high school underprepared, but schools are setting the students up for failure and low self-esteem. Hopper and Iwasaki (2017) addressed the importance of reaching youth during important life stages through community involvement. They advocated that the offering of meaningful courses enhances students' capabilities and increases their viability, all of which are the goals of basic-skills programming. When students are unchallenged or feel the work in which they participate is meaningless, they tend to lose interest and disconnect themselves from it.

Low SES students also face educational challenges because they are more likely to work full-time and may have families to support (Thomas, 2014). Parent involvement is a contributing factor to college entrance; students from higher SES homes have increased support and involvement than students from low-SES homes (Stephens, Hamedani, & Destin, 2014). Giraldo (2009) asserted that “the world is becoming polarized into central and peripheral economies; the gap between rich and poor has increased” (p. 15). Continuing to ignore the issue of undereducated students may further the disparity between students of high SES and students of low SES, which may continue the cycle of families with sufficient resources and those without.

Student Assessment

When students are not academically prepared, they will either lack the skills needed to enter college or be unsuccessful at their college attempt. Berg (2016) proposed that a shift from using generic assessments to rate student preparedness for college to offering basic-skills courses before, during, and after high school would be of greater benefit to the student. Generic testing assessments only offer insight into a student’s test-taking abilities and do not factor in outside effectors. Continued use of generic assessments in cases where a student does not pass is not a clear indicator of a student’s abilities. Continual failures on these assessments can often lower the student’s self-esteem and perpetuate disinterest in academics. If students were able to achieve solid skills before leaving high school, they would be prepared for higher education and have a better chance of succeeding; students who do not have adequate basic skills are at a

greater risk for unemployment, depression, and early childbearing (Barratt, 2014). With a higher chance of succeeding, students and their communities will benefit from higher wages and skilled workers.

Global Education

As the world continues to move further to globalization, it becomes increasingly important for students to be prepared for an ever-changing world with increasing demands. Gallo, and Beckman, (2016) wrote extensively about the changing world and its effects on children and the U.S. educational system. They explained that young adults will be facing a new world order, one in which they will have daily contact with individuals from diverse ethnic, gender, linguistic, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds. They will be experiencing and exposed to some of history's most serious health problems, inequities among less-developed and more-developed nations, environmental deterioration, overpopulation, transnational migrations, ethnic nationalism, and the decline of the nation-state. The effects of this global new age will be challenging for them emotionally, intellectually, and physically; their well-being will be at stake. All children, regardless of where they were born, have a right to be educated (Gallo & Beckman, 2016) The challenge will be for that education to produce graduates who will be fully equipped for the 21st-century global community, and if they will be equipped with the attitudes, knowledge, and skills they need to be competent, responsible, and humane citizens of their community, state, nation, and world. These fundamental

questions face educators in the new millennium, when the global age requires a global education (Gallo & Beckman, 2016).

The way for society to reach global education is through continued education, collaboration with community, and a commitment to the educational and social needs of youth as students and as members of our communities. Community partnerships between educational facilities and local businesses could provide resources that could benefit programs like the EST program. Dedication and commitment to students through time and resources will be one of the best efforts to combat this problem (Agbaria, 2011).

Commitment to Students

The region in this study has used CE courses since 1972. In the past 4 years CE courses have been declining in enrollment (SBSI, 2012). Worldwide researchers have suggested CE is an integral part of education socially and economically (Care & Anderson, 2016; Hagedorn, & Kuznetsova, 2016; Woessmann, 2016), and students who are engaged in schools that are valued and supported by local government and communities have a greater positive effect on their community (Epstein, 2013). Communities that include basic-skills courses have success in student learning and in high school retention. A commitment to increase completion for a college education must be met with higher readiness levels of incoming students, which is the most important factor in completion (Spence, 2009). To provide students with the skills needed to attain higher education, communities need to be committed to the programs offering those skills. Schools have not kept pace with rapidly changing demographics (Florian & Pantić,

2017). Consolidated schools are more common in districts faced with budget deficits, and that consolidation has changed many of the demographics of existing districts. Schools that were once predominately high-SES schools now have demographics ranging from low SES to high SES. Schools, which were once predominately Caucasian are now ethnically diverse. These changes in demographics require new ways of educating and increased awareness of student differences. Lack of awareness and failed changes to educational practices have hindered the achievement of students and perpetuated the advent of greater numbers of underprepared students (Florian, & Pantić, 2017).

Benson et al. (2012) reported that the role of the community and education system played an imperative role in combating community problems, such as students who are falling behind academically. Community members through commitment, and partnerships with education to provide the necessary programs to achieve the goals of the community and education systems must support the needs of communities. School systems need to reflect the community and society as well as influence the community to properly equip students to participate in its workforce (Epstein, 2013). The focus of this study on the EST program and its declining enrollment connects with the findings of Benson et al (2012) on the importance of education to the community and supporting students who are having challenges.

The importance of basic skills and commitment to students is evident in the research of Kraebber and Greenan (2012), which purported students will succeed further when there is a link between the length of their education and the self-confidence they

attain when supported by their educational system. The National Center for Education Statistics reported that 50% of United States had changed their proficiency standards, hoping to show their schools were reaching proficiency standards (NCEE, 2012). Evidence such as this displays a lack of commitment to students to achieve higher educational goals.

Despite debate over basic-skills courses and whether they should be offered before college, at a community college, or at a 4-year college (Grubb, 2013), it is important for the student to be able to have access to low cost basic skills courses. When basic skills courses are only offered through a university, students often cannot afford the financial burden of the additional classes, thereby hindering access to higher education. Basic-skills programming not only prepares students academically for college, it offers the programming at a low cost, easing the financial burden of higher education.

Basic Skills Influence on the Workforce

Businesses and community members are concerned with the statistics of students who are not at the educational level they should be at to enter college. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Jobs for The Future developed a model to address the needs of students. The model has three phases, two of which emphasize preparation through high-quality instruction, teaching students college-ready skills, and providing counseling to aid in the transition to postsecondary education (Maxwell & Person, 2016). The example of the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation indicates a need for additional educational support for students, and also indicates that students who are lacking basic

educational skills can have an effect on the larger population. Other agencies are also concerned with the importance of basic-skills education. A study was conducted with welfare recipients who were required to return to school to receive benefits; the results indicated that participants lacked the basic skills needed to obtain a GED, and also expressed their understanding that obtaining additional education was key for them to be employed (Turner, 2016). Confirming the impact on the workforce, men and women who did not reach a level of at least a high school diploma before the age of 20 did not do as well in the workforce as those who had a high school diploma (U.S. Department of Education National Center for Educational Statistics, 2012). The information from this study suggested a need for programs such as EST to offer the additional educational support that students are lacking.

The BLS (2017) found that an aging workforce coupled with slow population growth is creating a shortage of skilled workers, and creating higher demands, skills, and competencies. The BLS also implied that workers may be unemployed because the number of those with a high school diploma or less has quadrupled in the past 30 years. Employers in this report suggested that as many as 87% of high school graduates are inadequately prepared for the workforce. The BLS confirmed that as of 2020, the United States will be facing a shortage of as many as 21 million skilled workers (2017). These statistics suggest a scenario of the future; the United States needs to be concerned about the education and welfare of its communities. Properly educating, training, and preparing

the students to integrate into the workforce should be a priority of U.S. educational systems and school communities.

In times of high unemployment, employers have sought to fill as many as 3 million jobs with skilled laborers (Society for Human Resource Management and Achieve, 2012). The majority of job openings in the United States require some education beyond high school: workers who are considered to be skilled. Often referenced as a skills mismatch, employers have struggled to find workers who are capable of performing in the job market due to lack of skills. To achieve the goal of increasing college graduation rates by 10%, students need to be prepared academically for college entrance and completion (Society for Human Resource Management and Achieve, 2012). A hindrance to that goal was reported by The Workforce (2000, as cited by Demetrian, 1999), which reported that 35 million Americans lack basic skills and will need to improve these skills to adequately perform in the changing workforce and 15 to 20 million of those workers severely lack basic skills. The lack of skilled workers must be addressed to avoid future problems such as: stagnated economic growth, increased use and cost increases in welfare programs, foreign-competition concerns, and a decrease in the national standard of living

Other corporate organizations recognize this problem and have been working to offer their employees opportunities in basic skills. One significant employer who offers online training in basic skills to help advance their employees is McDonalds. The McDonalds program, called Our Lounge (McDonalds, 2016), offers training in areas

from basic skills to how to open a checking account. McDonald's philosophy in regard to the Our Lounge Program is that corporations need to provide education and training to support the under-prepared worker in order to have a more productive workforce (McDonalds, 2016). McDonald's philosophy relates to this study in that, community involvement, and alternative educational approaches are key factors in helping students succeed.

Understanding problems surrounding the EST program phenomenon is an integral part of addressing the training and preparation of our students to enter the job market with skills to support attainment of employment thereby helping to address the problem or gap in practice identified as the basis for this study. The collaboration of the independent school district, community involvement from businesses, and EST program personnel may create stronger alliances which could educate youth and establish a more skilled workforce. It is reported that the United States has a surplus of 20 million members who do not have the basic skills needed to adequately participate in society in terms of obtaining a meaningful job and contributing to the economy (BLS, 2017). Hence, it is critical to examine this phenomena more deeply through examining the literature base related to basic-skills courses needed to attain growth so that students could be adequately prepared for workforces in their communities.

Lifelong Learning

EST programming helps students stay on track with high school graduation and gain college entrance; students who can successfully enter and complete college may be

more able to compete in a rapidly changing society. Everyday advancements are made in technology, requiring workers to be reeducated to meet the latest demands of the workforce (Clark, 2012; Dobbs, Lund, & Madgavkar, 2012). Such advancements change the dynamics and requirements of the workforce, making it a demanding learning environment where workers need to keep up or be left behind. This ongoing change in technology continually changes the needs of employers and the demands on employees, increasing emphasis on lifelong learning. Globalization and changing technology have an effect on individuals, especially when they are trying to find their identity and sense of self (Zhao & Biesta, 2012). Lifelong learning is a permanent feature of society, and that learning is central in all social relations and inherent to all social interactions (Quendler, & Lamb, 2016). Many teachers report feeling trapped in their learning environment, deterred from using social and inventive styles of teaching that promote lifelong learning (Clark, 2012). When educators are unable to help some students successfully accomplish important educational goals, it becomes important to offer students an alternative source, such as EST, to build their skills and education.

If lifelong learning is an integral part of globalization and an ever-changing society, then basic-skills education must be at the core of every student's education. Students who have strong core skills and education will have the proper foundation with which they can become lifelong learners. When communities offer such programs, they are reaching out to youth to afford them global opportunities.

Implications

The purpose of the study was to gain a deeper understanding of the problem of declining enrollment in the EST program and the factors leading to declining enrollment in the EST program in order to address the concerns and close the gap in practice.

Findings from the data collection and analysis suggested potential areas of concerns, which included; family obligations; times the programs are offered; lack of transportation; and lack of child care.

Based on the findings from the surveys and phone interviews, I have data which support reasons for declining enrollment to report to the EST program leaders. These data collected will help inform the leaders to determine the actions to engage in to increase EST course enrollment. The findings of the data collected indicated areas of concern, which included; lack of child care, the time courses are offered, instructors, family obligations, and financial difficulties. Based on findings from the survey and phone interviews, one outcome for the study will be to develop a professional development (PD) program workshop for faculty and staff about the declining enrollment in the EST program and supporting the development of an action plan to address the findings of this study. One reason for reporting to the EST leaders in a professional workshop would be to engage the leaders in sharing their perceptions regarding the declining EST enrollment as well as to inform stakeholders about the findings and implications of the study.

Through a review of the findings from this study, I was able to identify problems within the current EST programming, but they may be factors that cannot be corrected

through the EST program. For example, changes to the curriculum may involve a process that is time consuming and the EST program may discontinue educational programming before the process is complete. Additionally, EST programming may not be able to accommodate time changes due to the operational hours of the school classrooms they use, and the availability of instructors. Other findings, such as students lacking child care so they can attend EST programming, may be a factor that the EST program cannot make accommodations for due to funding, or a lack of available child care centers accessible to the students. Further findings that indicated students' lack of finances to attend the EST program, may not be resolved due to lack of grant money, or available scholarships as a result of budget cuts, or funding restrictions.

Summary

In review, the problem that initiated this study was why the enrollment is declining among EST programming offered by CE. In reviewing the literature, researchers indicated that the United States faces significant shortages of skilled workers and burgeoning numbers of students are not completing high school; those who have completed high school are still lacking the basic skills needed to enter the workforce and higher education institutions. Basic-skills education courses and programs such as EST help targeted students gain the skills necessary to compete in a global society. In order to study this phenomena and more deeply understand the problem, I collected data from an online survey and one-to-one phone interviews. The participants in this study were

current and former students, teachers, and administrators. One goal of this study was to identify the gap in practice related to declining EST enrollment.

The content of the following Section 2 is a discussion of the methodology that guided this study including an overview of the research design, the rationale for the methodology selection, and a description of participants who were selected. Section 2 also includes justification for the study, access to participants, recording procedures, researcher–participant relationship, participant confidentiality, data collection, the researcher’s role in the study, data analysis, coding procedures, accuracy, and credibility.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of exploring the perceptions of teachers, administrators, and adult age student's perceptions was to gain a deeper understanding of the problem of declining enrollment in the EST program and the factors leading to declining enrollment in the EST program. Since 2009, there has been a steady decline in the enrollment in the EST program, and this has directly impacted the sustainability of the program (B. Johnson, personal communication, October 10, 2016). From the input of different stakeholders, it seems the EST program is an important program for students in this urban and rural area because it offers courses that teach students educational and social skills to help them gain success in high school graduation, test taking, improving grades, college entrance, and employment.

To explore these perceptions, the focus of this study was on the central research question: What are the factors leading to declining enrollment in the EST program offered by CE as perceived by teachers and administrators? To further support the central question, there were four sub questions that were addressed:

1. What do EST teachers, students, and administrators perceive as factors that have influenced the enrollment issues in the CE program?
2. What supports, processes, or structures do teachers, students, and administrators perceive would better support and increase EST student enrollment?
3. What curriculum do teachers and administrators perceive as appropriate to support the needs of students enrolling in the EST program?

4. What actions do teachers, students, and administrators perceive should be taken to address the EST program issues?

The problem of declining enrollment has resulted in a lack of programming designed for students to reach educational goals. One EST site has discontinued programming, and a second site will discontinue programming if enrollment does not increase. The purpose of this study was to examine the factors leading to declining enrollment in the EST program so that it may continue to offer educational programs to participants who are lacking basic educational skills.

Within Section 2 of this project study, I discuss the methodology used to analyze the findings to the central and sub questions discussed in Section 1. I conducted a collective case study approach that focused on survey data, retrieved from EST enrollment data base, SBSI (2012), and telephone interviews of teachers, administrators, and adult aged students. Through teacher, administrator, and adult aged students, surveys and follow-up phone interviews, I analyzed the participants' responses as to what their perceptions were as they related to the phenomenon of declining enrollment among EST courses. In addition, within Section 2, I discuss sample procedures, data collection, and data analysis methods. By employing a case study approach, I obtained data that provided a rich and detailed description of the experiences of the teachers, students, and administrators within the EST program.

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

To address the local problem of EST's declining enrollment, I implemented a qualitative case study inquiry approach to examine the current practices of the EST programming from the perspectives of adult aged former and current students, instructors, and administrators. The rationale for using a case study approach was based on the premise that a case study allows a researcher to study a phenomenon in its own context and setting and gives the opportunity to create a plan of action from the data that were gathered from the study (Merriam, 2009).

Several characteristics are important to a case study. Case study is an in-depth description of a specific phenomenon. Although case studies may focus on a specific person in a group or setting, more often a case study focuses through inquiry, on a specific phenomenon. Other characteristics allow for a researcher to study the phenomenon in its natural setting or context; examples include observing teen-parenting classes or students who are in drop-out prevention courses. Case study designs are used to collect data through surveys, interviews, and observations, which allow for rich descriptions of the setting and participants. The use of such rich description allows the researcher to gain a mental image of the experiences of participants and how they perceive the phenomenon, in this case, EST programming (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006 p. 124).

The empirical inquiry structure of a case study provides the framework for the case to be several individuals, programs, and activities (Creswell, 2009). For this study,

the focus was on the EST program, and the key participants provided their input into this phenomenon and the decline in program enrollment. The key participants of this study were current and former students, teachers in the program, and the administrators of the EST program. Glesne (2011) asserted that there are three different types of case studies. The first, intrinsic, provides a better understanding for the case study, such as a specific student. An instrumental case study provides insight into a specific issue or the ability to redraw a generalization. The third type, a collective case study, focuses on an investigation of a phenomenon, population, or general condition. The nature of this study was to identify the factors that contribute to the decline in enrollment from the perspectives of former and current students, teachers, and administrators; therefore, an intrinsic case study approach was a logical choice to access and gain that information.

Rationale for a Case-Study Approach

Merriam (2009) described a case study approach as a way to study a phenomenon through its real-life context; Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010) explained a case study as a way to focus on a small group of individuals in a certain group, to document the individuals' experiences in the research setting. For this reason, the study of EST declining enrollment was conducted using a case study approach.

With a case study approach, a small, purposively selected sample of current and former students, teachers, and administrators was studied. This approach provided the structure to look more deeply into the issue of declining enrollment and to hear ideas from participants who are currently enrolled in courses, were enrolled in courses, taught

courses, or provided the administrative support for courses. It also provided me the opportunity to be made aware and informed of the hardships and successes participants faced. The information and data gathered through the study were relevant to the real-life context of this programming that is designed for at-risk students. A case study approach provided the framework for me to survey and interview the participants, where I gained candid, personal, and practical information that identified possible causes of declining enrollment.

A case study approach is a more effective choice than other qualitative or quantitative research approaches. By definition, a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin, 2014). In conducting this study, the intent was to investigate the phenomenon of declining enrollment and to gain insight from students, teachers, and administrators as to their perceptions of the program. To collect this information, the process of a case study seemed most appropriate.

For the intent of this study, a case study was also appropriate because it constituted a bounded system that offered a limit to the number of people who were surveyed and interviewed for a finite amount of time (Merriam, 2009). In conducting a case study, I was able to use more than one data collection method, such as surveys, interviews, and observations (Galbraith, 2004); although for this study, only surveys and phone interviews were used.

Other research designs would not have been as effective as a case study, for example, an ethnographic study. An ethnography study focuses on human groups and generally focuses on an analysis of actions and interactions within a culture. This approach would have been less effective for my purpose of gaining data from the perspective of students, teachers, and administrators (Creswell, 2009). Grounded theory would not have been appropriate because I was not seeking to propose a theory. Phenomenology was also not effective because with that methodology, participants would all have needed to have had the same experience; thus, I would have studied that shared phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). A quantitative approach would not have been appropriate for the type of data collection that I was seeking through surveys with open-ended questions and interviews and the perceptions of the different participants in the study. Consequently, a qualitative approach using a case study method was the best choice to achieve the above-stated goals of the study.

Population and Sampling Procedures

The setting for this study was a rural public school district located in the Midwestern part of the United States. The district contains nine elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools, and a CE program. There are approximately 4,000 students enrolled in the elementary grade levels (K-5), 2,000 enrolled in the middle schools (Grades 6-8), and 2,000 students enrolled in the high schools (Grades 9-12; Independent School District, 2015).

The participants for this study were three teachers, three current and one former adult aged student, and two administrators who were employed in the EST program for a total of nine participants. Purposeful sampling was used to invite three adult aged, current students, three adult aged, former students, three teachers, and three administrators to participate in this study. For this study, there were 12 total participants who indicated their interest in participating in the study and who returned their consents, which included three former students, three current students, three teachers, and three administrators. However, there were 9 of the 12 participants who participated in the study, which included three current students, one former student, three teachers, and two administrators. Purposeful sampling was based on the assumption that I wanted to discover and understand a phenomenon, and the purposeful sample strategy enabled the selection of participants who had experienced the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). Creswell (2012) suggested that only a few cases are necessary in qualitative research studies; therefore, selecting only nine case study participants allowed me to gather in-depth, rich data that were coded into emerging themes about each participant.

Criteria for Selection of Participants

The sample selected for the study were three former and three currently enrolled EST students who were adult aged, three teachers, and three administrators. Using purposeful sampling, I chose three adult aged students who were currently enrolled in the EST program and three adult aged students who have previously participated in the EST program. The criteria for the student selection were students who were 18 years and

older, from a low SES background, and below their target grade level, which was determined from student registration forms. The rationale for choosing students from a low SES background and below target grade level is because they would be likely candidates for the EST program (B. Johnson, personal communication, October 10, 2016).

The teachers surveyed and interviewed in this study were also chosen using purposeful sampling. Criteria for teachers were teachers who were currently teaching at EST sites. Two teachers were chosen from sites with the lowest enrollment in comparison to other EST sites, and one was chosen from an EST site with the highest enrollment, which was determined by EST enrollment records provided by the EST program coordinator. The criteria for selecting the teachers to participate in the study were (a) teachers who have taught for a minimum of 5 years in the EST program and (b) teach at a program with students from the lowest socioeconomic background.

There are three administrators for the EST program, so the only criterion for the selection of administrators was that they were an administrator for the EST program. I purposefully sampled three administrators and invited them to participate in the study.

My reason for using purposeful sampling was to gain as much insight into the phenomenon as possible and to understand what the needs of the students were from participants who were familiar with the phenomenon (Lodico et al., 2010). The goal of the survey and phone interview was to ask participants questions that offered insight into the phenomenon of declining EST enrollment. Purposeful sampling allowed me to choose

the sample based on participants who may be rich in information (see Merriam, 2009), such as a student from a single-parent, low socio-economic home who was contemplating dropping out, an instructor who was struggling to keep the students interested in the curriculum, and an administrator who was trying to develop a program that was engaging and beneficial.

The chosen students were from the lowest socioeconomic level, identified through EST enrollment data, and were functioning below target grade level. The participants provided this information through enrollment in the EST course; the demographic information was provided to me by the EST site coordinator, who selected participants who met the criteria for the study.

Justification for Participant Selection

The purpose of this study was to explore teacher, administrator, and adult age student perceptions to gain a deeper understanding of the problem of declining enrollment in the EST program and the factors leading to declining enrollment in the EST program in order to address these concerns and close the gap in practice. I selected 12 participants for this study, as researchers have proposed that a smaller number of participants allows for deeper inquiry per participant (see Merriam, 2009). The diverse experiences from the selected participants provided a more complete view on what was accounting for the declining enrollment in EST programming. Merriam's (2009) suggestions supported the following justification for participant selection.

Justification for choosing three former students was to obtain perceptions from students who have completed enrollment in the EST course; the former students were able to offer insights as to how the program had or had not helped them educationally or as they prepared to enter in the workforce. These data provided also helped me to understand specific needs of the students as well as specific components of the program which were helpful or not helpful to skill development and securing a job. Since the former students completed the EST program, they offered insights into the challenges or opportunities they had encountered since completing the program.

Justification for choosing students of the EST program was to gain perspectives from students who were currently experiencing educational struggles and were seeking the extra educational support offered from the EST program. Students feel a sense of belonging to their educational community when their perceptions are valued among their educational leaders (Mbalinda et al., 2011). If students in this study perceived a sense of belonging in EST courses, they may have offered valuable perceptions and insights into the phenomenon of declining enrollment, current practices of the program, and whether or not they feel it is helpful and useful.

Teachers for the EST program were included in the study because they represented the educational side of the program, and they provided a different perspective from the student participants since they were delivering the curriculum to students rather than receiving the curriculum. The perceptions gained from the teachers offered insight

into the needs of the students, how the current curriculum aligned with the goals of the students, and their reported experiences in the EST classroom.

There are three administrators for the EST program, and they were all included in the study because they were all key stakeholders in the program. Consequently, their input provided useful insights to the study. Since the administrators developed curriculum and made the decisions as to how the program was operated, it was important to gather data from these key stakeholders. Data gained from the administrators were relevant to the study because they represented the stakeholder role of planning, developing, and overseeing all aspects of the EST program. Data gained from the administrators were useful when triangulated and compared with data from the students and teachers, as it offered another source of information and perspective of the EST program.

Access to Participants

To secure approval for research data collection within EST programming, I completed an application (completed August, 2014) for the proposed research and forwarded it to the community education director. Once approval of the research application was provided (Approved 11/4/2016), the next step was for the community education director to obtain approval from the administrators of the three targeted EST sites. I also sought approval to conduct the study through the Walden University Internal Review Board (IRB), which assigned me the approval number 11-01-16-0185759. After receiving Walden's IRB approval, I sent a notice of invitation to current and former students, age 18 and older, teachers, and administrators in the form of a email explaining

that a study would be taking place, and they were selected to participate in the study. I explained in the invitation letter to participate in the study to the first potential participant pool that I was seeking adult aged students enrolled in the EST program who met the criteria of: (a) being from a low socioeconomic background and, (b) testing below the high school grade level in which they were enrolled. I explained to the potential participants that their EST enrollment forms indicated the SES status, which was a criterion for the study. The second participant pools were former students who were enrolled in the EST program who met the same criteria as the currently enrolled EST students and sought to attend college. The third participant pool were the instructors for the EST program. Criteria for selecting the teachers to participate in the study were: teachers who had taught for a minimum of five years in the EST program, and had taught at an EST program with students from a low SES background. The fourth participant pool were administrators of the EST program who had oversight responsibility for the EST program, including the development of the curriculum. Participants were informed that the study would include a ten question survey, and a ten minute follow-up phone interview. I e-mailed the survey link, to all participants one week in advance of initiating the survey to the participants who responded positively that they were interested in participating in the study. Information stating the intentions of the study, which were to identify possible factors of declining enrollment among EST programs, was included. The participant sample was informed via email of the purpose of the study and the

criteria being used for the study sampling, which included being a current or former student, instructor, or administrator in the EST program.

To gain permission to conduct research, and have access to archival information, I contacted the director of CE and who in turn contacted the school administrator for each site. In a letter to the director and administrators, the intent of my study was explained, and permission was sought to conduct the study. Next, the coordinator from each of the EST sites was contacted by phone and by letter, stating my intent and approval for the study. After each site coordinator was contacted, I arranged a meeting with each site coordinator so that I could obtain a list of potential participants meeting the criteria for the study. Students were identified from EST registration data, which provided income data, and educational records. The coordinators from the EST program provided a list of students who met the inclusion criteria. The registration information provided the data, which determined if the participants met the following criteria of: (a) being over the age of 18, (b) having a low SES background, and (c) functioning below their target grade level.

To gain access to former and current students, I used the archival registration information provided from the students when they registered for the EST program.

Archival data were defined as, data taken from records collected by educators or educational institutions (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). In this study, I collected data from EST program registration records. After gaining consent from both the administrators and student participant populations, I accessed the archival data from the

EST program. Students who were enrolled in EST had already given written consent for their information to be used for purpose of study and educational use, so the information students provided in regards to income, education level, and targeted needs was used to determine students who were at the greatest risk and need. I contacted the students by e-mail. The email communication included the informed consent, and the request for their participation in the study. I contacted teachers and administrators by e-mail, asking for their participation in the study and included the invitation and consent to participate. In the email communication, potential participants were told that a yes response to the email acknowledged also served as informed consent to participate in the study.

Participant Confidentiality and Access

During the informed consent process, the participants were instructed to click on a link to answer questions, such as, highest level of education, years teaching, and current grade level taught. If a potential participant decided not to participate, then he or she selected, “*No, I do not consent to participate,*” and the screen took the respondent to a thank you page, finishing the informed consent process. Electronic data will be kept secure by being stored in password-protected files on my home computer and all non-electronic data will be stored securely in my home desk. I will store this data for 5-years, per Walden University protocol. A description of the data collection process involving electronic surveys and telephone interview follow-up call is described in detail below.

Prior to participating in the study and the first data collection through an online survey, informed consent was obtained through an initial email. A link to the survey was

provided with the informed consent form that participants received along with the invitation to participate. Information obtained from students in the online survey included basic contact information, demographics, highest level of education, and current grade level. Information from teachers included additional information such as the number of years of teaching experience, and what courses they had taught. I did not seek demographic information from administrators. Additionally, participants understood that consent regarding the demographic question portion of my study was acknowledged through the completion of the online survey in order to preserve participant confidentiality. I provided each participant an unsigned copy via email of the consent form before the interview in order to reiterate pertinent information related to this project study, such as background information, procedures, voluntary nature of the study, risks and benefits in the study, payment, privacy, and contacts and questions.

As evidence that I fully understood the ethical protection of all participants, I obtained a certificate from The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research. This research study had a low risk level to participants, and none of the participants had ever worked with me. Participation was voluntary. A meeting was held with the school administrators to reiterate the voluntary nature of the study, discuss the purpose of the study, and address any questions or concerns raised by the administrators. I compiled a list of participants who met the original criteria as alternate participants in the event that a selected participant later withdraws from the study. I emailed an invitation to participate and consent letter a second time to two alternate students, as two

of the first selected students chose not to participate. Overall, the safety, well-being, and confidentiality of all participants was a priority throughout the duration of the study.

Participant's identities were protected by using numbers as identifiers when reporting the findings within this project study. In addition, all electronic data collected from each participant will be kept secure by being stored in password-protected files on my home computer and all non-electronic data will be stored securely in my home desk. I will store these data for five years, per Walden University Protocol Data Collection Methods.

Researcher-Participant Relationship

To establish a researcher-participant relationship with site administrators, I spent one hour at each site prior to the start of the study, talking with the students, teachers and administrators. As a former coordinator for the EST program, I have working knowledge and understanding of EST sites. However, I do not now, or have I ever had a supervisory role or relationship with any of the students, instructors, or administrators. I did not recruit any students I know to participate in the study, so it was anticipated that all of the participants would not feel any coercion or conflict of interest as participants in the study and consequently, they would feel secure and candid in their responses to the online survey and phone interview questions. After receiving permission from each site administrator to conduct the study, I asked the site administrators for information on potential current and former students to contact about participating in the study. I contacted each participant by email.

Data Collection Methods

This study explored declining enrollment among EST programming. Within this case study design, I carefully considered the data collection methods, which were central in exploring the perceptions of students, teachers, and administrators in regard to declining enrollment among EST programs. The data collection methods used were intended to gather data from key stakeholders in the EST program. The data collection instruments used provided me with sufficient data for the study. The data resources for the study included an online, 45 minute electronic survey consisting of 10 open-ended questions. A link to the survey site was emailed to all participants. After the survey was completed, participants were emailed a copy of their survey answers, and a follow up telephone call was conducted with the participant to review their answers to the survey questions. The archival documents reviewed from EST software, SBSI (2012) were: (a) student's target grade level, and (b) socio economic status. Archival documents were only used to determine the required criteria for student participants.

Electronic Surveys

Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010) maintained that data collected via surveys provide rich data on opinion, beliefs, and perceptions about current issues. After informed consent forms were obtained, I emailed participants a link to a researcher produced, open-ended questionnaire as the first data collection instrument. I used a survey as it was a safe way to gather initial data, build a relationship with the participants, and to provide a rapid turnaround (Merriam, 2009). Creswell (2014) identified surveys as

a convenient, less intrusive strategy for gathering data. I surveyed and interviewed two former students, two current students, three teachers, and two administrators for a total of nine participants. Initially, the data collected were the responses the participants offered to the 10 survey questions. Surveys were generated through a survey site, and the link to the survey was emailed to all the participants so they had time to review the questions and think through their responses. The survey consisted of 10 questions that related to the participant's perceptions and experiences with EST and the research questions that guided the study. All survey questions were open ended so participants were able to express themselves, and not feel that there was a specific type of response expected. Since the survey was online, participants were able to spend as much time as needed to answer the survey questions; however, I requested that the surveys be completed and e-mailed back to me within one week of receiving the e-mail. Participants were informed that they must complete the survey from their private email to ensure confidentiality. A confirmation receipt accompanied the emails sent to participants to provide a record that the participants received the e-mail. If a participant did not return the survey, a follow-up reminder e-mail was sent after one week. If the participant still did not return the form, a follow-up phone call was made to the participant after three days, asking that he or she was interested in participating and if so to please return the consent form. Not all of the participants responded. Twelve participants were initially indicated an interest in participating however only nine participants responded and completed the notice of consent, and survey.

Telephone Interviews

After receiving participants' responses to the survey questions, I sent them via email a brief summary of their responses to the survey questions. Within one week, I contacted them by email to arrange time for a brief follow-up phone call. The follow-up phone calls were an opportunity for the participants to elaborate on their responses, and for me to ensure accuracy through this member checking phase. Participants were asked if they had any additional thoughts to add to their survey responses since completion of the survey, and if they wished to add to or modify any existing survey responses. Each interviewee was numbered 1 through 9 to ensure that the participants' identities remained confidential. Participants were made aware that I would audio record each telephone call labeling each recording only with the associated number of each participant, and that the recording would be destroyed after the data analysis was completed.

All telephone data were transcribed, verbatim, so that an electronic case study database of these data could be readily coded, analyzed, and stored or retrieved after the data collection and after the research was completed (Yin, 2014). Using an audio recording helped minimize any anticipated ethical issues that might bring harm to the participants, such as risks, confidentiality, deception, and informed consent (Yin, 2014). Meticulously organizing the data into a case study database when multiple individuals are being sampled is the most effective and efficient way to keep track of the collected data during the analysis processes (Merriam, 2009). Additional information gleaned from the

phone calls to participants, whether it was to modify or add to a response, was included in the data collection process on the respective participant survey.

Archival Documents

Archival documents provided me with a richer source of information that assisted me in validating data collected via survey and follow up telephone calls to participants (Creswell, 2012; Yin, 2014). The archival documents reviewed were: (a) participants' target grade level, and (b) SES status. I was granted access to archival data that included information that assisted in identifying potential student participants, current and former students. Archival data was only used to identify potential participants for the study. Participants were informed, and signed a waiver stating that they understood the information was public as per grant regulations. These archival documents were examined for completeness and usefulness in determining if potential student participants met the criteria for this study (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014).

Sufficiency of Data

I used various techniques to collect data from teachers, administrators, and students in order to solicit their perceptions and experiences about the declining enrollment among EST courses as stated in the research questions. The goal was to promote enrollment for low SES students and students who tested below their target grade level in a rural Midwestern school district. The rationale for using the qualitative case study design for this study was to determine the effectiveness of the PD trainings for

declining enrollment for teachers, students, and administrators in the target school district, and to address the research questions in this study.

System for Keeping Track of Data and Emerging Understanding

In order to organize the data collected from the surveys and semi-structured interviews, field-notes and journal reflections were written during and after each data collection phase to monitor the process of data collections as well as analyze the information (Merriam, 2009). Reflections were written immediately following each telephone interview to record thoughts, behaviors, and reactions (Creswell, 2012). Field-notes regarding each of the data collection phases were organized by highlighting key words, quotes, and emerging themes, and understandings. Notes and reflections regarding each telephone interview were recorded on an interview protocol. According to Merriam (2009), member checking is a common strategy in ensuring internal validity and credibility. I was the primary instrument for collecting data. Therefore, I encouraged participants to read transcripts and make corrections where necessary. The participants were given a copy of the transcriptions and the researcher's interpretations of the interviews to make comments and/or necessary corrections. Member checking and debriefing were valid methods to assure participants that there were no judgements or negative thoughts based on any experiences or perceptions revealed during the surveys and telephone interviews. Member checking served as a safeguard against biases, and ensured internal validity and credibility (Merriam, 2009).

Role of the Researcher

To establish a researcher–participant relationship with site administrators, I spent one hour at each site prior to the start of the study, talking with the students, teachers, and administrators. As a former coordinator for the EST program, I have working knowledge and understanding of EST sites. However, I do not now, or have I ever had, a supervisory role or relationship with any of the students, instructors, or administrators. I did not recruit any students I know to participate in the study, so it was anticipated that all of the participants would not feel any coercion or conflict of interest as participants in the study and consequently, they would feel secure and candid in their responses to the online survey and phone interview questions. After receiving permission from each site administrator to conduct the study, I asked the site administrators for information on potential current and former students to contact about participating in the study. I contacted each participant by e-mail.

In order to protect participants from harm in this study, all participants were informed of the potential risks of participating in the study. Possible risks of this study may have included: stress, fatigue, anxiety, and embarrassment. In the case that a participant suffered from any of the potential risks of the study, a counselor from the school was available and accessible to the participants. Participants were made aware of all the risks in the informed consent. I upheld the highest ethical standards in this study to

protect the participants, and all participants were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary

My role as a researcher may have been one of familiarity, due to my past employment with CE. My relationship with all participants was professional. Even though I am a past employee of the program, I assured all participants that my personal beliefs were not part of the study, and that in no way would their answers affect their affiliation with the EST program. Before each survey, I explained verbally and in writing that the information gathered from the survey questions would not be used in any manner other than for the purpose of the study, and there would be no type of repercussion or consequence to participants for their answers. I also kept a reflective journal that helped me be aware of potential bias or concerns regarding the study.

With any study that relies on participants' answers for the data, the researcher faces the chance of unreliable data (Merriam, 2009). My intent was to remain as neutral as possible in the researcher-participant role. In providing participants the above stated information, I hoped to reduce any bias that would cause the results to be unreliable. I know that there was the possibility that I may have felt biased in certain areas simply because I have worked with the program, and have my own thoughts and ideas about the declining enrollment. To help uncover any bias I may have had, I had a peer de-briefer ask me the survey questions before I conducted the surveys with participants. The peer de-briefer signed a confidentiality agreement before participating in the peer debriefing process. The peer de-briefing process helped me verbalized survey responses, which

helped raise my awareness of my thinking regarding the survey and phenomena being studied. I also had the de-briefer review the data and my analysis to check for any possible biases and/or accuracy regarding my interpretation. This strategy aided me in being more aware of my biases, and enabled me to remain more neutral during the survey review process and while conducting phone interviews with participants. As a researcher, I know I had to be diligent in documenting exactly what students reported and remembered in addition to not letting my thoughts and opinions interfere with the data collected or with the analysis process.

Data Analysis

The goal of this qualitative case study was to investigate declining enrollment among EST courses from the perceptions of teachers, administrators, current and former students. The data analysis consisted of specific analytic techniques of axial coding and categorizing the collected data. Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the surveys, interview transcripts, archival documents, and other materials to enable the researcher to come up with findings (Merriam, 1998). The data analysis focused on the experiences and perceptions of teachers, administrators, current and former students on the phenomenon of declining enrollment.

In order to ensure accuracy and credibility, the data from the surveys and telephone interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim into a Microsoft word document and stored in a password protected computer. Within one week the data were

prepared for coding after the completion of the surveys and telephone interviews. The data analysis process was completed within two weeks after the data collection process.

The first step in the process was to organize and prepare the data for analysis. This involved transcribing interviews, and sorting and arranging the data into patterns and categories. Secondly, I analyzed each transcript and interpreted all responses by carefully reading and rereading sections of the transcribed data to reflect on the information and to get a sense of its overall meaning (Berg, 2007). Then the transcribed data were divided into six major themes.

Data Analysis Methods

The information gathered from the participant surveys and phone interviews were analyzed after all the data were collected. The data analysis began immediately after all survey questions and interviews questions were returned to the researcher. An initial summary of the data was emailed to each participant to check for accuracy of the survey information. After each participant had one week to review the summary, I arranged a follow-up phone interview with each participant. Data collection, via the survey and phone interview continued until saturation was reached.

I recorded the data collection and analysis in a journal with detailed notes of the survey questions and material from the interviews. I did not use software in the analysis process. I analyzed data categories gathered from the survey and interview questions by reading and rereading the answers given by the participants, and following Berg's (2007) model of analysis.

The process for analyzing the content of the data was done manually, and followed the steps below.

1. Identify the research question.
2. Determine analytic categories.
3. Read through data and establish grounded categories.
4. Determine systematic criteria of selection for sorting data chunks into the analytic and grounded categories.
5. Sort data into various categories, and revise categories if needed.
6. Count the number of entries in each category.
7. Consider the patterns in light of relevant literature or theory/discover possible links to other theory or research (Berg, 2007, p. 286).

In following this model, I extensively read and reread data from the surveys and phone interviews to search for phenomenon that is related to determine themes and subthemes and to search for patterns. During this process, I asked myself the four questions to keep my analysis on track.

1. What do I notice?
2. Why do I notice what I notice?
3. How can I interpret what I notice?
4. How can I know that my interpretation is the right one (Hollway & Jefferson, 2005, p.55)?

Accuracy and Credibility

It is best to have multiple sources for validation to offer more credibility to the study. In addition, the transcribed conclusions of these data were made available to participants for review for potential bias or inaccuracies. Summaries were e-mailed to participants and they reviewed the summary for accuracy. I asked them to add any thoughts that occurred to them after the actual online survey to the transcription, which I sent to them to check for accuracy. The participants did not choose to add any additional information at this time, and no discrepancies were noticed. If there were any discrepancies between my data and the participant's data, I would have used the same peer de-briefer to review these data for any discrepancy that might have been overlooked. Triangulation was also used to offer credibility and accuracy, which will be discussed in the next section.

Evidence of Quality

It is often difficult for qualitative studies to capture an objective truth or reality. One way to increase the credibility of this study was through triangulation, where common ideas and themes are compared for validation (Merriam, 2009). The four types of triangulation are multiple methods, multiple sources of data, multiple investigators, and multiple theories. Multiple sources of data triangulation was used when cross checking data collected in surveys and phone interviews from different perspectives of the participants. Former and current students, teachers, and administrators were surveyed and interviewed in this study; as a result of the emailed questionnaire and follow-up

phone interviews, triangulation occurred since there were multiple sources of data. The categories identified from the surveys and phone interviews were analyzed using multiple sources of data triangulation to determine similarities and common themes among participants. The intent of triangulation was to confirm these data obtained from the participants, and what I gleaned in my review of the documents to determine if there were similarities, thus providing validation to these data (Glesne, 2011).

Member Checking

The member checking process was a valuable way to ensure validity and reliability. After the online survey, participants were emailed a summary of their survey answers so they could review them for accuracy. During the phone interview, participants were able to confirm with me that their responses to the survey questions were accurate. During this phase of the study, I was able to speak with the participants about their responses, which helped confirm that the responses I received were what the participant intended to convey. The process of member checking allowed the participants to check for errors, or misconceptions of their responses (Creswell, 2009). Participants did not change any of their original feedback.

Discrepant Cases

Merriam (2009) recommended a researcher should look for any variations in phenomenon. These variations may be ideas or themes, which are contradictory to other information from participants, referred to as discrepant cases. Lodico, et al. (2010) defined discrepant cases as information that contradicts or disconfirms the hypothesis.

Any data obtained which seemed contradictory to other information from the participants would have been noted since this type of contrary information is important and adds to a realistic and more valid presentation (Creswell, 2014, p. 202). This study did not have any discrepant cases.

Data Analysis Results

In qualitative analysis, the researcher uses a process that involves reviewing the data collected, and then interpreting that data. In this study, I read and re-read the data from the online surveys and the telephone interviews to develop a general sense of the data; then the data was categorized into themes and sub themes. For this study, there were 12 total participants who indicated their interest in participating in the study and who returned their consents, which included three former students, three current students, three teachers, and three administrators. However, there were 9 of the 12 participants who participated in the study which included three current students, one former student, three teachers, and two administrators. Participants' actual identities remained confidential and participants were identified by pseudonyms. Students were identified (S1, S2, S3), former students were identified (FS 1), teachers were identified (T1, T2, T3), and administrators were coded (A1, A2).

Participants who responded with a "yes" to the invitation email were sent another email from me with a link to the survey. Participants were asked to complete the survey within one week. Participants who did not complete the survey within the first week were

sent a reminder email that they could still complete the survey if they were willing. All surveys were completed and assessable to me within 2 weeks.

Participants of the study were asked 10 open ended questions. The survey questions were:

1. What do you perceive as the factors that have influenced the enrollment issues in the CE program?
2. What supports, processes, or structures do you think would better support and increase EST student enrollment?
3. What curriculum do you think would be appropriate to support the needs of students enrolling in the EST program?
4. What actions do you think should be taken to address the EST program issues?
5. How would you make Extra School Time more assessable?
6. What part of the EST program do you think is/was least helpful?
7. How do you feel about the enrollment fee charged for attending the EST program?
8. How do you feel that child care and/or other family obligations interfere with EST attendance and enrollment?
9. Do you think the curriculum is helping participants achieve goals of graduation, college entrance, and career placement?

10. Is there anything else you have thought of about the EST program that I have not asked you about?

Within 10 days of receiving these data from the online survey, I transcribed and emailed transcriptions of these data to the individual participants to check for accuracy. After the participants received the transcribed results from the online survey, I conducted a ten-minute follow up phone interview with the participants. During the phone interview, the participants were asked if there was anything that they wanted to add or modify related to their survey answers. All phone calls were audio recorded for accuracy and reliability. Participants were given the opportunity during the phone interview to clarify answers, review their answers for accuracy, and to add any further information that they felt may be helpful to the study. All of the participants chose to add further information during the telephone interview.

Once all data were collected from both the online surveys and the follow up telephone interviews, I used triangulation to search for major themes and sub themes. The major themes were identified as themes, which were reported by participants six or more times, and themes reported by the participants three or more times were labeled as subthemes. After the themes and sub themes were identified, these data were composed into a document, which was emailed to the participants to again check for accuracy. Participants were able to email me and report any inaccuracies. No inaccuracies were reported, nor were there any discrepant cases. The participants were candid in their responses, and appeared to offer honest and open responses. The findings of the study were

based on the problem of declining enrollment among EST programs and based on the research questions listed in the following section.

Findings

In this subsection, I provide a summary of the findings for the four central research questions, which is separate from the themes from the findings. I organized this subsection as follows: RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4. Within this section, I discussed the findings of the data analysis. Member checking and peer debriefing were implemented to help interpret the results of the data analysis in order to reinforce the dependability and validity of the findings. This section consists of the following subsections: demographics, data results, results and summary of findings, research questions and sub-questions, themes from the findings and summary. A summary of the findings is organized based on how the participants responded to each research questions. The research questions that were explored in this study focused on students identified as low SES background, testing below their target grade level, and consisted of the following:

RQ1. What do EST teachers, students, and administrators perceive as factors that have influenced the enrollment issues in the CE program?

RQ2. What supports, processes, or structures do teachers, students, and administrators perceive would better support and increase EST student enrollment?

RQ3. What curriculum do teachers and administrators perceive as appropriate to support the needs of students enrolling in the EST program?

RQ4. What actions do teachers, students, and administrators perceive should be taken to address the EST program issues?

The six major themes that emerged from the online surveys and the follow up phone interviews were: (a) Lack of child care (M), (b) Transportation (M), (c) Work conflict with class attendance (M), (d) cost of attendance, (e) convenience of times classes are offered (M), and (f) offering courses that were relevant to the student (M). Two sub themes that emerged from the data were: (a) more encouragement and support was needed from teachers (m), and (b) students were interested in on the job training (m). A detailed description of these themes is provided in the following section. When presenting supporting quotations from the participants, the participants will be identified as follows: S1, S2, S3, FS1, T1, T2, T3, A1, and A2.

Findings from the Problem and Research Questions

Research Question 1: What do EST teachers, students, and administrators perceive as factors that have influenced the enrollment issues in the CE program? Based on the research question one's analyzed data, three major themes emerged (M). Following a presentation of these data I will discuss the findings.

Major theme 1: *Lack of childcare.* The most common theme that emerged from the data was lack of child care. Participants expressed that they desired to attend EST programs because they wanted to better their lives through education, but felt trapped because they were single parents and could not afford child care, or did not have access to care. Participants expressed a great need for child care that was not only affordable, but accessible to the students. Participants felt that there is a lack of providers in their neighborhoods, which is prohibiting students from attending classes.

Student participants 1 and 2 reported that they often did not come to classes because they did not have child care during the daytime hours; money to pay for child care was limited; teachers did not allow children to come with parents to classes; and there was a lack of child care in the immediate area. Teacher participant 1 reported that many of their students called in to class because they did not have child care. They reported that many of the students do not attend classes because they cannot find child care, or their children are sick. Teacher participant 1 reported that she felt discouraged because students are missing out on vital class time; and that many teachers have witnessed students drop out over the years because of these issues. Students who are parents need additional supports such as child care, additional financial assistance, and access to a strong support system to help them be successful in an educational setting (Green, 2013). It was recommended by student participants 1, 2, and 3 that EST programming offers on-site child care that was free or low cost to students with children. Administration participant 2 also felt that a lack of child care was a deterrent for many EST students. He reported a high number of faculty had concerns about a lack of child care, and how the issue could be addressed. (Administrator participant 2).

Lack of child care was reported from participants 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7 of the study. It is evident from students, teachers, and administrator's responses that it is a major factor in student attendance. Kaminer, (2016) further suggested a dire need for increased funding for child care stating numerous harms occurring to families with children, including direct consequences in work and education.

Major theme 2: Transportation. The second major theme was transportation.

Transportation issues were also reported as having an effect on students who were participating in the EST program. The EST program in this study serves small rural areas that have limited access to public transportation; some of the areas do not have any access to public transportation. Although EST sites are located on local bus routes, student participants 1, 2, and 4 reported that they did not live close to bus stops, and that the bus schedules did not coincide with class times. Cold weather was also a factor for the students who relied on public transportation. Students reported that the winter months could be extremely cold, even dangerous to be outside for an extended period of time. Public transportation also carries the risk of running behind schedule causing students to be late, or miss classes.

The issue of transportation was not only reported as an area of concern from student participants, but it was also implied that it was a personal safety issue. Student participant 1 reported that the extremely cold weather affected their attendance because they worried about frostbite while waiting for public transportation. Student participants 2 and 4 felt that lack of public transportation; sporadic routes and times of public transportation, and lack of reliable vehicles were factors that contributed to declining enrollment.

Teacher 3 and administrators 1 and 2 reported that they saw a decrease in attendance when the weather got colder. They reported that during winter months the absentee calls generally related to; student's cars would not start, they did not want to

walk to the bus in the cold, or they did not want to bring their children on public transportation in the cold because it was a long distance to walk to the transportation. They also reported transportation being an issue for my students, as many of them do not own cars and rely on public transportation (city busses) to get to class. During the really cold months, December – February, class sizes drop significantly. Administrators 1 and 2 reported student's desire for the EST program to offer transportation, but they were not able to accommodate them due to budget constraints.

Major theme 3: Work conflicted with class attendance. Participants also felt conflicted over choosing to work or attend EST programming. The data suggested that the students had the desire to complete the EST program, but work was a factor that prohibited them to do so. EST classes are held during daytime hours, which often conflicts with student's work schedules. Data supported the need for classes to be held at varying times so that working students could attend more conveniently. One option that was a common theme among participant responses was to offer online classes for working students.

Participants reported that they felt trapped because they wanted to attend classes, yet they needed the money they received for working. When faced with the choice between providing for themselves and their families or attending class, the participants chose work. Students 1, 2, and 3 felt their work schedule interfered with class time. All of their schedules continually changed, and they stated they would prefer to have online courses so that they could attend classes on a schedule that was convenient for them.

They also expressed frustration over having to choose between the two options, and it felt like they were never going to get ahead in life, and would always be poor because they never got the chance to finish high school or go to college.

Dougherty and Sharkey (2017) proposed that addressing the individual needs of students and offering support where needed offered the best outcomes in regard to graduation and student retention. Teacher participants 2 and 3 reported similar findings. They expressed that students were often absent due to conflicts with their work schedules, or would drop out of the EST program because they had been offered employment they felt they could not refuse. The obligations students felt for providing for themselves and families outweighed their desire to attend EST classes, even if it meant they may not achieve their educational goals. They agreed that students generally put work before class, and are faced with extraordinary struggles every day just to put food on the table. Many of them receive public assistance and they overhear students talking about car troubles and overdue bills. Administrators 1 and 2 described students who quit the program because the needs of their families took priority. They also agreed enrollment was decreasing, and the main complaint brought to them was the lack of convenience of the EST program.

Research Question 2: What supports, processes, or structures do teachers, students, and administrators perceive would better support and increase EST student enrollment? This research question had one major theme (M) and one minor theme (m).

Major theme 1: Offering courses that were relevant to the student. There was one major theme from research question 2. Participants reported that teachers and administrators should be more aware of the specific needs of the students. Student participants 1, 2, and 3 expressed the need for the leadership of the EST program to listen to their needs and desire in order to offer a more desirable program. Students who felt their voices were heard saw greater educational success and increased self-esteem (Allen, & Nichols, 2017); however, students expressed that they felt their voices were not heard, and the program did not offer classes in the areas that they felt were most needed. It was suggested that more classes should be offered for GED preparation, and the times of the classes should be varied so it would be more accessible to students. It was also expressed that many of the classes offered were not relevant to all students and the desire was for EST to offer specific classes such as math, or reading instead of block courses, which included several areas of study. Students also recommended that it better served the students to offer classes that were tailored for specific areas of study. Suggestions included having classes specifically for students who needed help in Math, Science, English, and GED preparation courses. Students in this study were mainly concerned with courses that were specifically designed to help them study for their GED.

Minor theme 1: More encouragement and support was needed from teachers. Teachers 1, 3 and administrator 2 agreed that declining enrollment starts directly with students. Teachers felt they spent the most time with students, and knew their lives, problems, wants, etc. They felt that changes should occur by starting to hear the student's

needs, not the teachers telling the students what they think they need. It was also reported that students tell the teachers that they dislike the way courses are designed, but educators tend to feel that they know what is best for students. Student needs were expressed as a concern from all participants, including administration participants. Administrator 2 was concerned that they were not staying current with curriculum, and felt that the EST program may not be serving the students as well as they could be. They offered that a decline in enrollment could be due to offering outdated courses and materials.

Participants of the study implied that the students' needs were not being addressed. They felt that this could be a reason that enrollment was declining in the EST program. It was recommended that the needs of the students could be better served if classes were tailored to the specific needs of the students, if more classes were dedicated to GED preparation, and if more courses were updated to incorporate laptops and more technology such as on-line classes.

The participants in the study expressed feelings of guilt for leaving their families and attending classes, as well as feeling guilty because they had to work instead of attend class. A common theme among student participants was that they wanted to attend class because they knew it was the best way for them to get ahead in life. Participants referred to the "cycle of poverty" and expressed that without their GED and a college education, they would never be able to find employment paying much higher than minimum wage:

"It makes you feel like a loser when you are 20 years old and still don't have a diploma". When I call in to class you can tell the teachers think you are just skipping out.

I wish they would be nicer and offer help instead of judgement. I don't know, I guess it just makes you feel like more of a loser, and that makes me want to go even less because I feel stupid (S1).

It was also reported that students desired more encouragement, and the need to be told that they are worthy, and doing a good job in the classes. Participants expressed that they often felt dumb or stupid when teachers had to explain concepts to them, creating a general feeling of contempt for the teachers. Administrator participants also expressed the need for extra encouragement for the students: People already feel dumb being in the classes, and when the teachers act like you should already know the stuff they are teaching makes it worse. Not all of the teachers are like that, but some are. It would be nice if they said something nice when you pass a test, or do good on an assignment, at least people wouldn't feel stupid then (S3). Sometimes I don't ask questions because I feel stupid for not knowing. "Sometimes the teachers make you feel that way, maybe it's just me, but I think other people feel that way too" (S1). It's kind of embarrassing, but no one ever tells me I'm doing a good job, or good work. Somedays I need to hear that (S2).

Being in administration, generally the complaints are what come through most often. At the end of every semester we ask students to fill out a survey about the classes they were enrolled in. I would say most semesters I get surveys that indicate students are not receiving the support they need from teachers. The students do not often elaborate on what support they need, but a few students report that the teachers are not helpful when

they miss class, and treat them like they are stupid. Very blunt answers sometimes, but I think that is what they feel inside (A2).

It was suggested that the students had a desire to be told they were worthy to be in classes, and that they could achieve college entrance to help them find higher paying jobs. Current and former student participants reported a lack of self-esteem and the need for extra encouragement from their teachers. It was suggested that students felt shameful, or embarrassed because they had not already graduated and had fallen behind and needed the support from teachers to help them overcome their feelings of failure.

Research Question 3: What curriculum do teachers and administrators perceive as appropriate to support the needs of students enrolling in the EST program? This research question had one major theme (M) and one minor theme (m).

Major theme 1: *Convenience of class times offered.* Convenience of EST courses in regard to the times classes were offered and the delivery method of the classes was reported as having a negative effect on enrollment. Students 1, 2, and 3, reported that daytime classes interfered with work schedules, and it would be more convenient if EST offered online classes that could be completed at their convenience. Schools who give students the opportunity to choose online courses report an increase in the number of students who enroll and complete courses (Cintrón, & McLean, 2016). Teacher participants 1, 2, and 3 suggested the idea of online courses to accommodate students who worked, had children and families to care for, or struggled to get to class due to transportation issues. Although this was not prioritized as a main concern for declining

enrollment from participants, they did report the need for convenience of programming as a significant factor in declining enrollment. Participants felt enrollment would increase if EST offered online courses, or incorporated more courses at different times to accommodate working students, and students with families. Teachers 1, 2, and 3 reported the need for online classes and felt most other educational institutions offered online courses. They suggested that older administrators were slow to adopt new ideas and felt the lack of technology is causing the decrease in enrollment.

Students 1, 2, and 3 also reported a desire for online courses. They advocated that online courses would help better prepare them for college because they would have more experience with computers and online courses. Students also felt that online courses were more convenient and that with online courses more people would enroll. In addition, they noted that with online courses, fewer people would drop out. Participants reported several reasons for their perceptions of declining enrollment: lack of child care, family obligations, transportation, and work conflicts, all of which they felt could be eased if courses were offered online.

Teachers 1, 2, and 3, students 1, 2, 3, and 4 and Administrator 2 felt that the EST classes were not effective in retaining student enrollment. The times classes are offered were reported to be inconvenient for working students with children and other family obligations. The participants expressed the need for the EST program to incorporate more technology such as laptops and online options for students to help retain and increase

enrollment. It was implied that other similar OST programs offered online courses, and the participants of this study desired it also.

Minor theme 1: On the job training. Students expressed a desire for on the job training or classes for specific fields such as welding or healthcare. Participants expressed the desire to have classes that offered on the job training where they could learn different skills and explore career options they may be interested in. It was also expressed that through the student's exploration of career options they may be motivated to continue taking EST classes to help them achieve their career goals. Students felt that if there were classes in skilled trades they could start to learn a skill before they enrolled in college: I think classes would have been more fun if we were learning to do something, not just studying for tests. I think learning to weld, or learning construction would have been cool. If students could do more stuff like that maybe they would want to go to school for something like that (FS1).

Something that could be considered to help enrollment might be offering classes in on the job training. Many students have not learned the skills needed for successful employment, or have little or sporadic work histories. If students could train with local employers in various fields they could learn those skills and find a career that interests them. "Very few of my students even know what they would want to go to college for when they graduate, I think on the job training could help them in several ways" (T2).

On the job training is an area that we (administration) have looked into for our EST students to help increase enrollment. The high schools offer it as a means to develop work skills in students, and it has been very successful (A2).

The participants advocated that enrollment could be increased in the EST program by creating more options for students. Participants felt that on the job experience and learning skilled trades would not only be engaging and fun, they would be helpful to students by teaching them both physical and work-related skills. Participants expressed that by incorporating skill training and on the job training, students would be more likely to want to participate in EST programming.

Research Question 4: What actions do teachers, students, and administrators perceive should be taken to address the EST program issues? This research question had one major theme (M).

Major theme 1: Cost of attendance. Participants felt that the cost of attendance was one of the largest factors that prohibited them from enrolling and completing EST courses. Currently, EST programming charges \$600 for a 4-month quarter. Scholarships are offered to students who qualify financially, but are limited due to funding. Participants' responses were candid; they felt EST was too expensive. Student participants 1, 2, 3, and 4 stated several disadvantages to the cost of enrollment in the EST program. Disadvantages included: they had to choose between working or going to class; paying rent and bills took precedence over paying for class; and they had to work more to pay for class, which took time away from studying.

Students 1, 3, and 4 compared EST to college where students could qualify for financial aid that would pay for the cost of attendance. They felt that more money should be offered in scholarships that could be used for child care or transportation costs such as bussing, and proposed funds similar to college grants as a resource. Student 4 was able to attain an EST scholarship and was able to complete her GED, but stated she “would not have been able to do so if she had to pay for the tuition fee on their own”. Students who are under a greater financial burden have higher dropout rates, and often suffer from increased stress levels that lead to poor performance and lack of confidence to complete their education (Mukherjee, McKinney, Hagedorn, Purnamasari, & Martinez, 2017). Although the cost of attendance is less expensive than a semester at a community college in the immediate area, it was expressed that the cost was a burden to students, all of whom said they could not afford to pay on their own if they did not receive a scholarship. Participants 1, 2, 3, and 4 expressed that the cost of attendance was not affordable without scholarships, and that most students could not afford to attend if they had to pay for the classes on their own. A feeling of frustration was expressed about students wanting to go to college to make more money, but not having access to the resources they needed to do so. Administration participant 1, and 2 reported they saw the needs of the students but felt that their “hands were tied” due to lack of funding. They also expressed how difficult it can be to offer quality programming for students at a reasonable cost, and that students often did not understand that the fees go towards teacher salaries, building costs, and curriculum. Teacher participants 1, and 3 expressed understanding that there

needed to be a fee, but felt that even a low-cost fee was too expensive for most students who were in need of the EST courses.

Findings

This structure for data collection resulted in findings that support the research questions that guide this study. Six major themes emerged from the data collection: (a) lack of child care, (b) cost, (c) convenience, (d) work, (e) transportation, and (f) student's needs. Two sub themes, which emerged were: (g) the need for student encouragement, and (h) on the job training. The findings provided important information relating to the problem of declining enrollment in EST courses. The greatest effect on enrollment reported by participants was the lack of child care for their children while they were attending classes. It appeared that many of the students enrolled in the EST courses were not able to attend classes due to lack of child care during class times. The effects of this problem appeared to have impacted students being able to attend classes, which often times did not allow them to complete their courses and achieve their goals of graduation and college entrance. Since there were a number of factors that participants reported as being factors in declining enrollment, there are two options that may help provide recommendations for the EST program. The first option would be a program evaluation, which would critically examine the program. A program evaluation would collect and analyze information regarding activities, outcomes, and characteristics. Its purpose would be to improve effectiveness and inform decisions. The second, and most effective option would be a 24-hour PD workshop for the faculty and staff of the EST program. The data

indicated that the needs of the students were not being met, due to lack of child care, cost of attendance, transportation, work obligations, convenience, and student's personal goals. Participants indicated that if the EST program were to offer services such as on-site child care, online classes, or specialized classes geared towards their specific goals they would be able to attend classes more often, which would increase enrollment. A 24-hour PD program training would inform the faculty and staff of these issues pertaining to declining enrollment and inform them of the data collected. With the information from the data, faculty and staff would be informed of key factors reported by participants leading to declining enrollment and would allow them to make an informed decision about possible changes that could be made to help increase enrollment based on the data from the study.

Conclusion

In section 2, I discussed the methodology of the study. The methodology included the research design and rationale, role of the researcher, setting, participant selection, instrumentation and data collection, data analysis plan, data analysis results, and findings. To maintain alignment with the purpose of the study stated in Section 1, the qualitative research design with a collective case study approach was used to further investigate the central phenomenon. Based on the results of this study, a PD program will be designed to address ways to improve enrollment among EST courses. The PD will prepare teachers and administrators to better serve the needs of the students of the EST program as indicated by the findings from the study. The ultimate goal is to provide teachers and

administrators with the skills necessary to increase enrollment, address student needs, and attain additional funding so that they are able to better serve the needs of the students.

In Section 3 of this study, I will describe the project, a blended PD program that resulted from the findings of this study. In addition, I will discuss the description and goals, rationale, review of literature, implementation, and formative and summative evaluations of the project. Finally, I describe the implications of this project including positive social change.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

Based on the research findings, a 24-hour PD program was determined to be the most appropriate approach for this study. This section includes a description of the project, the goals of the project, rationale, and a review of relevant literature. This section also is comprised of content on the potential barriers of the project, recommendations for improvements, how the findings will be incorporated in the final project, and a timeline for improvements. Finally, I conclude with a discussion on the project's potential to create positive social change.

Description and Goals

The problem of this study was the declining enrollment among CE EST courses for adult students. There were six emerging themes found from the data collected. The themes were categorized in descending order from having the greatest impact on participation to having the least impact on participation. The emergent themes in descending order reported by the participants were lack of child care and family obligations, cost of attendance, inconvenient class times, conflict with work, lack of transportation, and curriculum that was not beneficial to the students.

Participants of the study reported a need for free on-site child care for their children or financial scholarships to help with the cost of child care while they were attending classes, a reduced cost of attendance, which included the suggestion for free

classes or more funding for scholarships, a wider selection for class times that included more evening classes or on-line classes, accessible transportation, and the desire to have input into what courses are offered so they would be more beneficial to the students.

The emergent themes from the data were common to all participants of the study; teachers, current students, and administrators all reported similar concerns and issues with the current programming from each of their respective perspectives. Therefore, based on the feedback from the participants, the most appropriate project seems to be a faculty/staff PD program designed to accomplish four goals:

Goal 1: Increase enrollment among EST programming. Faculty and staff will be educated on how to identify risk factors that could cause students to drop out. Further training will determine solutions to declining enrollment in the local community.

Goal 2: Assess students' needs. Training conducted by professional educators will facilitate processes and techniques for teachers to identify and assess the needs of the students so they can better serve them in EST courses.

Goal 3: Seek additional funding to improve and update the program. Professional grant writers will facilitate and offer hands on learning modules to teach faculty and staff how to research and attain additional funding.

Goal 4: Implement changes to address the needs of the students. Professional keynote speakers will discuss how local agencies offering similar services to the EST program address the needs of their students through outreach and specialized support systems.

Rationale

The findings presented within this study showed that there is a need for ongoing PD programs that specifically focus on student needs and funding within EST courses. Participants suggested that EST enrollment was declining because it was not meeting the needs of the students, and the course fees were too expensive. According to the EST program director (personal communication, August 21, 2017), no specific trainings targeting student needs had been offered in the past 9 years. Therefore, the study participants would strongly benefit from a PD program that focuses on increasing faculty and staff's understanding of student needs, and options for additional funding, which will also increase opportunities for increased enrollment.

Data collected from surveys and follow up telephone interviews indicated a consensus among participants that additional financial supports would help with individual needs, such as transportation, child care, and cost of attendance. It was also indicated by participants that increased student supports would positively affect enrollment and graduation rates. However, there were no district-wide PD program opportunities focusing on funding and student needs and supports.

A faculty/staff PD program was selected as the project because it includes background of the EST program, the information on the existing problem, summary of the research findings, and suggestions to help increase enrollment. By selecting a faculty/staff PD program, the evidence from the study can be provided to the staff in an efficient, timely, and convenient manner in which staff can become informed on the

reported needs of the program. Teaching and administrative staff will have the time during this training to meet with one another, as well as with keynote speakers, to discuss the issue of enrollment and possible solutions to the problem. It is assumed that the faculty/staff PD program will inform staff and faculty on the specific needs of the program as indicated by the data from the study with the intent of making changes to enhance the program and increase enrollment.

Review of the Literature

The review of literature provided the framework for the project, a faculty/staff PD program that is intended to address, educate, and train faculty/staff on the issues of declining enrollment among the EST program. The purpose of the PD will be to address key issues that have led to declining enrollment in alignment with the data that were collected from the participants of the study. Participants reported the need for child care, lower tuition rates, transportation assistance, and flexible scheduling of programs to help them coordinate outside responsibilities with EST classes so they will have a better chance of succeeding in the EST program. The key terms searched were *faculty development, professional development, financial assistance, grants and funding, underprepared students, GED, student success, retention, online education, student achievement, student assessment, low SES students, declining enrollment, barriers to education, education and finances, and students with dependents* to generate the most relevant data. Boolean searches were conducted through ERIC, Google Scholar, Sage, and Academic Search Complete. A filter was used to include research that was less than 5

years old and peer reviewed. The following is a review of the current research and theory on student success and retention among out of school time programs as well as suggestions and practices that faculty and staff can use for improvements to the EST program. The research provided in this section provides the framework for the development of an effective faculty/staff PD program intended to help increase enrollment in the EST program.

An issue for the EST program was that no PD program specifically focused on student needs, cost, and declining enrollment. This lack of PD left the student participants in this study feeling they were at a disadvantage, their educational needs were not being addressed, and their educational goals were not attainable. Additionally, teachers and administrators felt they did not have the resources or skills they needed to address the issues facing the EST program, nor did they know how to make necessary changes that would address the issues facing the program.

The project, a PD program of my study, used Merriam's (2008) adult learning theory as the foundation for the conceptual framework. Applying Merriam's adult learning theory supports this study's PD program because Merriam's theory recommended that the more we know about how adults learn and their specific needs, the better we are able to structure educational practices that resonate with the adult learners with whom we work. In addition, Merriam suggested that learning and education are more than a cognitive event, but a multidimensional process in which student's emotions, body, mind, and feeling construct significant learning. These ideas are especially

important in assessing student needs and offering quality EST programming in the PD program.

Student Needs

Participants of the study reported six major themes they felt affected the enrollment in the EST program. The six major themes that emerged were reported as having effects on the student's ability to attend classes regularly or was a factor in whether or not they were able to enroll in the EST program, which consequently affected their achievement. Levy and Polnariiev (2016) indicated students desire to feel that they are involved in their own education and need to feel confident that their ideas and opinions are valued by teachers and administrators. They further implied that there is a division between educators and students causing a decrease in student achievement, which could be addressed through collaboration between students and teachers (Levy & Polnariiev, 2016). Collaboration between the students and teachers would result in a shared vision where the needs of the students and the educational goals of the teachers created a learning environment that supported and increased student achievement (Levy & Polnariiev, 2016).

Lack of child care, cost of tuition, convenience of class times, work, transportation, and understanding the needs of the students were reported to be the main reasons students failed to attend classes, thereby causing declining enrollment. All of these issues were reported by participants in the study as barriers for enrollment among the EST program. Students who come from low SES backgrounds often suffer from

negative stereotypes, which can decrease self-esteem, confidence, and achievement (Jury et al., 2017). The effects of low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence can have lasting negative effects on students. Students who exhibit these signs are less likely to graduate high school, have difficulty gaining college entrance or completing college, and are employed in positions that are at or slightly above poverty level (Jury et al., 2017). Students who are in need of remedial courses such as EST are often at risk and are in need of additional supports above the general available supports that are offered to traditional students (Botha, Reese, Mattis, & Miller, 2014). Researchers advocated that teachers needed to be proactive in identifying students who are at risk and be trained in ways to provide assistance to those students so that they are able to achieve educational success (Botha, et al., 2014). If the EST program is to address these specific needs, it will be important for the faculty and staff to attend a PD program that will educate faculty and staff in techniques that will help them to address student needs and apply the learned skills to the classroom to help in the areas where student's needs are greatest. A PD could help faculty and staff create an EST program that is more accessible to students according to their needs, and this could help to increase enrollment and student achievement.

Professional Development

PD is specialized training or advanced professional learning that is intended to increase knowledge, skill, or effectiveness in a specific area.

It can also be described as a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to help faculty and staff increase effectiveness in the area of student achievement (Dedousis-Wallace, Shute, Varlow, Murrihy, & Kidman, 2014), which is a goal of the EST program. In an educational setting, it is a term that can be used to refer to the increased knowledge of faculty and staff to better serve the student population (Abbott, 2014). The main concept supporting PD is to take an identified issue, such as declining enrollment, and educate faculty and staff in practices that can be incorporated into their own current practices for the benefit of the students served (Kennedy, 2016).

Whitford and Barnett (2016) further suggested that the quality of education can be aligned with the quality of the faculty and staff. They also supported ongoing PD as a way for faculty and staff to become educated and trained on current issues and trends within the educational system with the intent to improve teacher preparedness and improve student achievement.

The faculty and staff of the EST program could benefit from PD program so that they may be better equipped to address the needs of the students within the program. Bayar (2014) suggested that any effective PD program should consist of the following components: a match to existing teacher needs, a match to existing school needs, teacher involvement in the design/planning of PD programs, active participation opportunities, long-term engagement, and high-quality instructors. Epstein (2013) also indicated the importance of quality PD program along with collaboration among teachers to build

strong support systems to improve outcomes for students. Further, Epstein asserted that PD helps teachers attain knowledge, skills, and the disposition to teach effectively.

The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) (2015) advocated that it is important for PD programs to be facilitated by persons who are well prepared and thoroughly educated on the topics where development is needed. NSDC reported that PD programs should be comprehensive and incorporate a collective responsibility among the faculty and staff to allow for the best possible outcomes for student performance. Katz, Brown, and Kim (2016) indicated that there are four key concepts, which are imperative to an effective PD program and are directly related to student achievement. The four key concepts are teaching, curriculum, assessment, and leadership; they were all reported as playing an important role in PD. The researchers suggested that it is not the brand name of the program, but the degree of implementation of the program (Katz, et al., 2016).

Bayar and Kosterelioglu (2014) further indicated that low quality PD programs can result in dissatisfaction among the participants when PD programs offer only traditional PD activities, do not involve teachers in the design of PD programs, ignore teachers' needs during the process of planning of PD programs, offer activities unrelated to authentic classroom situations, and have low quality of instructors in PD programs. Essentially, it is the practices of the faculty and staff that make the difference for student achievement. If the practices of faculty and staff were key factors that make a difference in student achievement, a faculty/staff PD program conducted by trained experts would seem to be the best choice for addressing declining enrollment.

Students with Dependents

Participants of the study reported that a lack of child care was a significant factor for absenteeism from the EST classes. Student participants reported that they felt guilty when leaving their children to attend classes. They also felt an increased sense of guilt if they were away from their children due to work responsibilities, and EST classes were often set aside to spend more time with their children. Teachers and administrators also reported parental responsibilities as a factor in absenteeism from classes. Combined with parental guilt, participants reported feeling that teachers lacked an understanding of the struggles of students who were also parents, affecting the confidence and self-esteem of the students. Murphy (2015) suggested that students who were also parents reported greater academic success when they received positive support and understanding from teachers, peers, and their communities. The findings from this study suggest that students could achieve greater success if a solid support system was in place for students. Draper (2015) proffered that the needs of students with dependents are quite different from traditional age students and they face unique challenges when balancing their time and energy between their multiple roles as student and parent. Further, Draper asserted that the needs of students with dependents are an area that is significantly under researched.

An increasing number of students have dependents, which creates a unique set of needs that teachers must now learn to address. Nearly one in four students are also raising a dependent child, and it is becoming increasingly important for educational institutions to create a support system for these students (Schumacher, 2013). Schumacher proposed

that students who have a greater support system within the educational system will find greater success as students. Further support for this strengthened support systems was reported by Green, (2013) who indicated students with dependents were at a higher risk of falling behind academically, were reported as having higher rates of absenteeism, and as possessing beliefs that they are not able to succeed academically. Additionally, research by Caldwell (2015) has suggested that students with dependents identify themselves as a parent first, then a student. Participants of Caldwell's study reported that they found it difficult to navigate in a traditional educational setting, but found support in established programs designed to help students with dependents find success.

Establishing a support system for students who have dependents is an important factor for keeping students enrolled in programs such as EST and helping decrease absenteeism. Nelson, Froehner, and Gault, (2013) suggested that educational facilities which offered on-site child care centers, benefits access services, housing services, and scholarships had great success among students who had dependents. The findings from the study indicated the use of grants designated to expand supports for students was a helpful factor for decreasing absenteeism due to parental responsibilities and helping to keep students enrolled in educational classes. Benton (2015) suggested the same need for established support systems for students with dependents. Students in this study who were in the process of acquiring their GED's reported the need for flexibility and a non-judgmental environment where supports were in place to help with their achievement. Benton also indicated that students had higher achievement levels, completion rates, and

success when educational institutions offered support systems for students with dependents. Further, Mendoza, Suarez, and Bustamante, (2016) advocated the need for a strong student support system. It was indicated by evidence from their study that students from low SES backgrounds often had other factors that affected their enrollment in school and retention rates. The findings in this study indicated that students required more support, and benefitted from a community approach to their education, which gave them a sense of belonging and increased retention rates.

Educational Costs

The participants of this study indicated that the cost of tuition was a factor in enrollment among the EST program, and also a factor for declining enrollment. Students felt that the cost of attendance was too expensive for them, and individuals who had low or no incomes. Many students who enroll in the EST program are from small, or rural communities with limited industry and low paying jobs. Limited employment can result in increased competition for higher paying job, jobs that may be unattainable to persons without degrees and limited vocational skills (Zegura, Grinter, Belding, & Nahrstedt, 2017).

Suggestions from participants included, more opportunities for scholarships or grants to help offset the financial burden of the cost of attendance, or lower enrollment fees. Similar to the participants who described the struggle of going to class or spending time with their children, they felt they had to make similar decisions in regard to paying for EST classes or providing for their basic needs. Zacharias, et al. (2016) suggested that

students who received scholarships due to need rather than merit reportedly had reduced stress, better morale, and felt they were allowed more time dedicated to their studies at their educational institution. Students in the study were selected from the most disadvantaged groups who were most at risk of dropping out of school. Based on the findings of this study and implementation of the findings, which included students receiving scholarships based on need resulted in an increase in student retention and increase in student success.

Financial hardships were reported as a major issue for students who wanted to attend EST classes, and Duncan and Murnane (2015) indicated that there is a widening gap between low and high-income students, supporting the idea that students with lower income were less likely to achieve the same educational level as students with higher incomes. Duncan and Murnane supported educational reform intended to address the financial needs of students from low income homes. Jury, et al. (2017) also reported a widening gap between low SES and high SES students resulting in students who suffered from poor emotional experiences, identity management, self-perception issues, psychological barriers, and motivation problems. Further, they implied that these issues may explain why students from low SES backgrounds suffered the worse academic outcomes, such as, taking fewer classes, higher drop-out rates, and lower GPAs. Jury, et al. suggested that educational institutions would benefit from reforms that were designed to combat the barriers low SES students faced. Reforms for the EST program could

include lower tuition fees, additional grants, outside funding from community partners, as well as programs for students that address their emotional and psychological needs.

The EST program is designed to help students achieve educational goals such as high school graduation, GED's, and college entrance. Participants of the study indicated they felt college was an unachievable goal due to financial constraints. Data from a study by Cawthon, (2014) proposed that students from low income homes did not view college as a viable option because of the cost. Students in the EST program reported similar feelings; they knew education was their way out of poverty, but because of the cost it was unattainable. Financial support for low income students is a key factor in retaining students and increasing enrollment as is evidenced in the study by Fack and Grenet, (2015). In this study, additional grant money was provided to students who were from low income homes, causing a 5 to 7% increase in educational institutions. It was also reported in the study that student persistence and degree completion increased when students had additional funding to help with expenses. Clotfelter, Hemelt, and Ladd, (2016) reported similar findings. They suggested that when students received additional grant money, graduation increased by approximately 8%, and academic performance increased. Clotfelter, et al. further indicated that low income students were most successful when they received grant aid and strong non-financial support.

The need for PD for educators is important as indicated by Barratt, (2014) who advocated the high importance of precollege preparation courses, but a lack of structure and educational opportunities for low income students in place among educational

institutions. Barratt further indicated that the challenges of low income students is not being adequately addressed, further supporting the need for the EST program to conduct a PD program to address the needs of its participants. This need for further PD programs is also supported by Habel, Whitman, and Stokes, (2016) who suggested students from low SES backgrounds, and students with financial hardships have the greatest need for educational support. They indicated that low SES students who desire to enter college and further their education are in need of programs such as basic skills education, foundational studies, and preparatory programs that provide access to generalist degrees and enable experiences to enhance and increase the potential for student success within degree-level studies. A PD program for faculty and staff of the EST program would provide the education and tools necessary to develop high quality programming that is designed to meet the needs of the students financially.

Flexible Class Options

The participants of this study reported that inconvenient class times, and a lack of online course options was a deterrent for students. Lack of child care, work conflicts, and transportation during traditional daytime class schedules prevented many students from participating in the EST courses, and subsequently was reported as being a possible reason for low and declining enrollment. It was also suggested that online course offerings could help increase enrollment because it would be more flexible and accessible for students with families, work commitments, and unreliable or no transportation because the classes could be attended at the convenience of the student. When students

suffer from conflicts between their personal lives, work demands, family obligations, and personal responsibilities, they often prioritize these obligations over class attendance and homework because they find balancing family life and school too difficult (Da Cunha, Moura, & Analide, 2016). When a student's personal life takes priority over school, students often drop out of school or suffer from failing or poor grades and low self-esteem (Mendoza, Suarez, & Bustamante, 2016).

Cole, Shelley, and Swartz, (2014) reported that students found the convenience of online courses to be the biggest factor for choosing and enrolling in a school. Students liked the ability to attend classes and complete assignments at times, which were convenient to them and did not interfere with their personal and work schedules. Smart, and Saxon, (2016) further supported the convenience of online classes for students. Adult students in the study reported that online classes were attractive to them because they were faced with multiple responsibilities, some of which prevented them from enrolling in traditional classes and furthering their educational goals. Students also said that it was significantly easier to log on to a computer at their own convenience and complete course work through online instruction. It was noted by students that navigating the online class at their own pace helped them in their studies (Sanford, Ross, Rosenbloom, & Singer, 2017).

Although online course offer convenience, some students reported feeling disconnected because they lacked interaction with peers and instructors. Even though they had feelings of being disconnected, they still cited convenience as a number one

reason for enrolling in online courses. Another study of online classes resulted in similar findings: student enrollment increased; study efforts were increased; and students reported feeling satisfied that they were in control of how and when they attended classes and studied (Chen & Chen, 2014). Online courses at educational institutions can be a key factor in increasing enrollment. Recent researchers have indicated that educational facilities that offer online courses have had an increase in enrollment (Chen, Zydney, & Patton, 2017; DeBoer, Ho, Stump, & Breslow, 2014; Ho et al. 2014).

Although researchers have indicated that online course options may increase enrollment, findings from studies also indicated that the success of online courses is related to the effectiveness of the teachers who conduct the courses (Means, Toyama, Murphy, & Baki, 2013; Ni, 2013). PD designed for teachers who teach online courses is an important factor for the success and continued enrollment of students (Simonsen, Smaldino, Albright, & Zvacek, 2014). Online courses offer a technical advantage to students, but often lack pedagogical issues and the support of implementing courses that are engaging to students (Vai, & Sosulski, 2015). Teachers who have participated in PD programs, and online course trainings have experienced higher success rates in student retention and enrollment (Coll, Rochers, & DeGispert, 2014).

Addressing Student Needs

Understanding the needs of each individual student can be a challenging task. The “21st century student” is much more complex than students of previous generations. Teachers are experiencing students with life circumstances that have major effects on

their education and success (Beetham & Sharpe, 2013). Participants of this study reported several challenging needs such as parental responsibilities, work, transportation and lack of sustainable income. Challenging circumstances facing students were reported as key factors that were prohibiting students from completing EST courses and achieving goals of graduation, GED completion, and college entrance. Students reported that it was important for the administrators and teachers of the EST program to understand their individual needs, and they had expectations that EST programming should offer support in the areas reported in this section. The participants also expressed the need for alternative options for students who were facing barriers in completing the program.

A major theme that was reported in this study was a lack of understanding and support from the teachers. Students reported that they felt shamed or guilty when they called the teachers to inform them that they would be missing class due to family or work obligations. Students expressed the need for teachers to be more understanding of the personal struggles they were facing, and desired to feel supported. It was also reported that students had feelings of embarrassment when they could not afford to pay course fees, or find transportation to the classes. It was implied by student participants that a lack of understanding caused low self-esteem, and a poor attitude towards their studies and teachers.

A study by Dixon, Hardin, McConnell, and Yssel, (2014) recommended that PD for faculty and staff that focuses on the needs for individual students brought positive results in student achievements. It was also suggested that teachers who received greater

numbers of PD hours learned how to identify a student's strengths, and personal needs, which increased student success and achievement. Bayar (2014), also implied that teacher preparedness is linked to student achievement, and yet many teachers are entering the field unprepared. Data from the study proposed that PD for teachers could help remedy this situation by addressing the needs of the students and the schools. Further, Nelson, Clarke, Stoodley, and Creagh, (2014) suggested that teachers who were trained in a model designed for student engagement, success, and retention, had the potential to positively transform the academic and personal experiences of students. Additional studies by Early and Porritt, (2014), Lauer, Firpo, and Buchting, (2014), and Vanassche and Kelchtermans, (2016), supported PD for teachers as an important factor in helping increase student achievement and retention. Early and Porritt (2014), implied that PD may help put focus on student learning and help teachers determine specific needs of students which could help student achievement. Lauer, et al, (2014), suggested that PD for teachers had positive results on student achievement, and helped teachers create student centered settings. They also indicated that PD helped teachers become active in understanding student's needs and aligning those needs with classroom objectives. Finally, Vanassche and Kelchtermans, (2016), offered further support that PD for teachers could help them research their own teaching practices with the purpose of improving it, and expanding their expertise.

The literature review offers research and data to support the needs of the EST program. Participants in this study have indicated specific issues and needs that could be

causing declining enrollment. Issues include: Cost, child care, transportation, student needs, and flexibility. Conducting a PD program for faculty and staff would offer the education and supports needed to improve the current EST program and increase enrolment.

Project Description

The project will be a blended PD program, entitled *Increasing Teachers' Understanding of Students Needs to Increase Enrollment Among EST Programming*. Through surveys and interviews with current and former students, teachers, and administrators of the EST program I was able to learn about study participants and their perceptions as to why the EST program enrollment was declining. I was concerned about the declining enrollment, and the effects it could have on students in the local community if the EST programs were cancelled. The success of students achieving GED's, high school graduation, and college entrance are dependent on programs that offer extra educational assistance, such as the EST program. Many students enrolled in the EST program are below their target grade level, and rely on the additional supports EST programming offers. The faculty and staff of the EST program are in need of a PD program and training in areas of student support so that enrollment can be increased and students who need extra educational help can be achieve their individual goals.

Data collected from the participants of the study suggested that the EST program was lacking in areas of child care, affordability, transportation, convenience, and student support. In response to the data collected, I developed a PD program designed to train

and educate faculty and staff on resources that will help enrich the EST program and address student needs. The goal of the PD program is to increase enrollment by connecting faculty and staff with various local and state resources, which offer financial and other supports to better address the specific needs of the EST program students. Educating faculty and staff on resources for themselves and students would have a positive impact on student success.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

I chose a PD program because faculty and staff could be educated on the perspectives of the students as to why enrollment was declining, and to connect faculty and staff with the resources that could help them learn strategies to help increase enrollment. The goals of the PD program will be: to increase enrollment among EST programming, assess students' needs, attain additional funding to improve and update the program, and to implement changes to address the needs of the students. Professional keynote speakers will discuss how local agencies offering similar services to the EST program address the needs of their students through outreach and specialized support systems.

education for faculty and staff on funding and grants used to obtain and implement more resources for students such as child care, transportation, and lap top computers; education for teachers on identifying and addressing the needs of the students; and education for teachers on researching funding and grant writing. The professional agenda will focus on the following areas; the role of teachers, the role of administrators, the importance of

professional grant writers, the involvement of professional in the field with experience with at risks students, and the involvement of local community partners. Physical resources will include a room with tables large enough to seat 15 people; a laptop computer; and a projector. The Community Education Director will be contacted to for approval to conduct the PD program, followed by a letter of consent.

Potential Barriers and Solutions

I anticipate the following potential barriers could impact attendance. The PD program will consist of three full eight hour days. Faculty and staff may have previous obligations or classes occurring at the same time as the scheduled training sessions. If there is a scheduling conflict, teachers may have to find substitutes for their classes, which could provide a challenge for them due to the length and time of the sessions. Administrators may have other obligations that have priority over a PD program, therefore they may choose not to attend. Another potential barrier could arise from securing experienced and reliable guests speakers. Guest speakers and educators with expertise in OST programming may not be readily available, or may require fees that are not feasible for the EST program.

Potential solutions to these barriers could include scheduling the PD program during currently scheduled teacher in-service days, or opting to schedule the trainings during the evening or on Saturdays. Options for securing quality and reliable guest speakers could include researching various speakers and how well they were rated by past presentations, as well as requiring a contract to help ensure they will fulfill the

requirements of the PD program. Further solutions to potential barriers would be to secure funding to help offset the cost of conducting the PD program.

Implementation

Implementation of the project will take place at the Community Education administration building in February 2018. The PD program will consist of three days of training; each day lasting eight hours, for a total of 24 contact hours. The first training session will host two keynote speakers from local community partners and an audience of 12 participants composed of faculty and staff from the EST program. The keynote speakers will be from two local agencies that provide non- competitive services that are similar to the EST program, in that they provide unique services to at risk populations.

During the first day of the PD program session, faculty and staff will learn about the needs of the students, and perceptions as to why enrollment is declining in the EST program as suggested from the data from the study. They will also begin to learn about resources available to help increase enrollment. The goal of the first day of training will be to educate faculty and staff on these issues through collaboration, communication, interaction, and understanding student needs. The first day of training will introduce the key issues the EST program is facing, and begin the process of learning how to address the issues with quality plans and ideas that may offer potential solutions.

The second day of training will be a continuation of the first day, transitioning from the key issues facing the EST program into further understanding of the needs of the students as expressed from the data from the study. There will be one keynote speaker

who will be a trained professional with expertise in the areas of student development, achievement, and success. The speaker will offer education and training to the faculty and staff on how to identify student needs, and offer tools that teachers can incorporate into their curriculum to help students achieve greater success, and help retain enrollment. The key note speaker will help bring awareness to the faculty and staff on how to listen effectively, and recognize students who may need additional support. Student participants of the study expressed that teachers did not understand the obstacles they were facing, and desired a school atmosphere that was accepting and supportive. During this second day of training, faculty and staff will receive specialized trainings in student support to help meet the needs of the students.

The third and final day of the training session will consist of one key note speaker who is a grant writer from a local community partner. Cost, lack of child care, and transportation were key issues indicated by the participants of the study, all of which directly relate to the lack of financial resources in the EST program. For the first part of the training, the grant writer will educate faculty and staff on financial resources such as local funding, conducting fundraisers, and successful grant writing. This training will help faculty and staff to understand the process of locating funding sources and how to successfully secure these sources for the EST program. The second half of the training, will focus on how to write grant proposals, conduct fundraisers, and apply for funding. Participants will work in small groups of three and participate in hands on exercises in these areas. In the small groups, participants will practice writing mock proposals and

collaborate to develop a simulated fundraiser for the EST program. Through these processes, faculty and staff will learn valuable skills they could use to access additional funding for the EST program. Additional funding for the program could help students with child care, tuition, and transportation costs, which could then help increase enrollment.

Roles and Responsibilities

Faculty and staff should actively participate in the training, focusing on the education and resources they are offering. The goal of the PD program is to connect faculty and staff with education and resources that would help them develop skills in addressing student needs emotionally, educationally, and financially. The expectation of faculty and staff will be to implement the skills they learn in the training into their classes and the EST program as a whole. When faculty and staff have completed the training they will be equipped with a new skill set that could be implemented into the EST curriculum and programming for the benefit of the students.

Project Evaluation Plan

I will use summative evaluation to measure the results for the PD program sessions. The assessment for the project will take place at the closing day of the PD program. The purpose of a summative evaluation is to measure outcomes and to determine how those outcomes relate to the overall assessment of the program (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtler, 2010 p. 320). In this type of evaluation, summative data are collected and reported to faculty and staff at the end of a project (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtler, 2010 p. 321); in

this case, this will occur after the PD program has concluded, and I have been able to summarize the findings from the evaluation. The goal of the evaluation is to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the PD program. Conducting a closing day survey is the best approach to gain information in a timely manner. Faculty and staff will be asked to complete a survey consisting of questions designed to elicit responses from the participants that summarize their perceptions and experiences about the PD program. Closing day surveys will allow faculty and staff to express their perceptions of the PD program, and how well the objectives were met. Closing day survey questions will include:

1. When were you most engaged during the PD program?
2. When did you feel least engaged?
3. What can we do to make these sessions more meaningful to you?
4. Which components were most helpful?
5. Which components were least helpful?

The goal of the evaluation is to collect summative information from the faculty and staff who participated in the PD program.

Project Implications

Local and Far Reaching Social Change Implications

The intent of the PD program for faculty and staff is to address the declining enrollment among the EST program. The EST program, located in a rural area of the Midwest, lacks resources that could provide students with educational services. Students

enrolled in the EST program desire to attain GED's, high school graduation, and college entrance. The objective of this project is to provide a sustainable EST program by connecting faculty and staff with educational and financial resources that will support the student's needs in the EST program.

The EST program serves at-risk students, therefore a PD program could help increase enrollment and increase the number of students who are able to graduate and enter college and may also be used by other OST programs that are facing similar problems. Students who have access to additional resources offered by the EST program may find greater success in accomplishing their educational goals. Completion of GED's and high school graduation may motivate and encourage students to enroll in college courses and further their career goals. This PD program may also prepare faculty and staff on how to improve their support for the students of the EST program, which may help to increase the enrollment. Increased enrollment combined with additional student resources and support could also increase the number of students who enroll in college. Students who complete college with specialized training could have a direct impact on the local and national workforce by providing an increase in the number of trained professionals in the workforce.

Student participants of the study expressed the need for additional resources and support from the faculty and staff of the EST program. This information was a guiding resource in identifying areas of the EST program that were in need of improvement. Faculty and staff PD programs not only address the areas in need of improvement, but

create a support system for OST programs. This support system can be utilized to help further the growth of programs that serve at-risk youth nationwide.

The overall success and achievement of students is an important component of the EST program. When teachers implement what they are taught during the project, social change can be realized. “When PD is appropriately applied, instruction balances knowledge and strategies in a way which increases learning and application of that knowledge” (Mundy, Howe, & Kupczynski, 2015, p. 118). For example, social change will occur when teachers’ self-efficacy increases and manipulatives are implemented during EST courses, therefore, enhancing students’ achievement and educational goals.

Conclusion

In Section 3 of this study, I discussed the aspects of the project that were developed after gaining insight from students’, teachers’, and administrators’ perceptions of declining enrollment among EST courses. I discussed the description and goals, rationale, review of literature, implementation, and PD program of the project based on the data collected and analyzed within Section 2. Finally, I discussed the project’s implications including social change. In Section 4, I discuss the project’s strengths in addressing declining enrollment among the EST courses and discussed approaches to address the problem. Finally, I reflected and self-analyzed on what I learned about scholarship, project development, and leadership, and change.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

In Section 4, I present my reflections and conclusions about this project as they relate to declining enrollment among EST programming. Discussion in this section includes project strengths, limitations, and recommendations for alternative approaches. I also discuss my personal growth as a scholar, researcher, PD developer, and qualified practitioner. I conclude Section 4 with a reflection on the importance of the work and implications, applications, and directions for future research.

Project Strengths

It is important to discuss the strengths of this study addressing declining enrollment among EST programs. A PD program for faculty and staff was the best approach that would offer education to the EST faculty and staff on how to address declining enrolment and the concerns of the students enrolled in the program. PD training is supported by King (2016) as an effective way to enhance professional learning and support student outcomes. Faculty and staff who participate in the PD program will learn how to support students and EST program needs. In-depth training may help educate teachers on techniques to help reach at risk students and may supply them with tools to help increase student engagement and student success. This study allowed for students, teachers, and administrators to voice their perceptions and ideas about the EST program through surveys and interviews, which is beneficial for the EST program in addressing the problems and implementing a PD program. Once the PD program is implemented, faculty and staff of the EST program will be better equipped to support student needs,

and teachers may experience increased confidence. The keynote speakers will be well trained in education practices that may help facilitate better teacher/student relations that may build trust and empower students to achieve their goals.

Project Limitations

A key focus of the PD program is to connect faculty and staff with resources such as grants that will offer financial resources that would help students who need additional funding for tuition, child care, transportation, and various other needs. Grants are generally not a long term source of income and can be difficult to attain. Grant approval can depend on several factors such as how connected an organization is in the community, the number of past grants they have received, the size of the organization, and the financial health of the organization (Faulk, McGinnis Johnson, Stewart, & Willems, 2016). Further limitations may be a lack of a successful grant writer within the EST program. Without grants as supplemental funding, the EST program would not be able to implement recommended changes that required additional financing to support student's needs.

Additional student support and resources were indicated in the data collected from the study. Although they were suggested to be key concerns of the EST program, it is possible that faculty and staff do not agree with the suggestions. If faculty and staff are not in agreement with the concerns indicated in the study, they may not want to participate in a PD program or may not be willing to implement suggested changes to the program. My approach to addressing these limitations is to consider potential problems

with the PD program and allow feedback from the faculty and staff so that the problems can be resolved.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

The data from the surveys and interviews suggested that students, teachers, and administrators were aware of the problem of declining enrollment among the EST program. Suggestions for improvement included additional funding for tuition, child care, online courses, and transportation. I chose to conduct a PD program to help enhance current practices for faculty and staff and to help connect them with resources that would benefit the EST program. Enhancing current practices and attaining additional funding are key factors for student success and increasing enrollment. A PD program for faculty and staff is the best approach for the project to help research declining enrollment among the EST program; this method may produce the desired outcome of increased enrollment.

A PD program for faculty and staff is one of several approaches that could have been used for increasing enrollment. A different approach could have been a white paper report in which specific recommendations would be made and presented to the faculty and staff. Recommendations could have included offering additional student support, creating alternative class times, offering on-site child care, and transportation options such as bussing services. A second approach could have been a project evaluation. This option would have addressed the needs of the EST program and evaluated how the current program was functioning. An evaluation of the EST program would have allowed for faculty and staff to gain knowledge of the current practices of the program and

recommendations for improvement. A third approach could have been a training program for teachers to help better serve the needs of the students. This approach could have also included training on grant writing, which could have helped the program attain additional funding for student needs as suggested from the data from the surveys and interviews. All of the alternative approaches offer benefits that could have been helpful in increasing enrollment in the EST program. However, based on the findings from the interviews, the most effective approach to address the issues and equip faculty and staff with tools to make changes is a PD program.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

I began my doctoral journey 7 years ago, and I did not comprehend fully what it meant to be a scholar. In the past 7 years, I have learned from interactions with my classmates, committee chair, and second committee chair that being a scholar involves dedication, time, and a multitude of patience. My research started with the topic of addressing declining enrollment among the EST program. In completing each step of the research process, I gained more knowledge and was able to witness my personal growth through recommendations from my committee chair. As I would write and rewrite each section, I would remind myself that I was learning and growing as a scholar.

I worked closely with the EST program as a teacher and coordinator for 18 years and have always been dedicated to the mission of the program. The research that I conducted has taught me how to address the issues in a scholarly way that can have an impact on the

improvement of the program. I look forward to sharing what I have learned with past and future colleagues for the improvement of education practices and student success.

Growth of Self as a Scholar

Since the onset of my doctoral journey, I have developed into a scholar who has learned how to critically analyze the issues related to my research. I have learned techniques and developed skills in research, communication, and problem solving that help me in my current employment as a program director. My education at Walden University has taught me how to effectively communicate with colleagues through listening and offering input that is backed by credible resources. The educational experience that I received from Walden University has afforded me a scholarly skill set that has had a positive impact on how I am able to contribute to my field.

Growth of Self as a Practitioner

When I compare the quality of my work from when I first started my doctoral journey to the final project, I am aware of my transformation and growth as a practitioner. In the beginning, I remember having feelings of fear, self-doubt, and genuine nervousness about how I was going to complete this journey and how I would compare to other students; surely they were far more knowledgeable than I was! As each semester passed, I gained confidence in my work and began applying the knowledge I was gaining to my work in the education field. During the proposal stage is where I truly realized how far I had progressed. During this stage, I increasingly gained confidence as a researcher. Even though the frustrations of rewrites and edits often caused me to be discouraged, I

learned to be patient and accepted the continual challenges associated with conducting research. Through these challenges, I was growing into a better scholar and practitioner, and I am now able to apply these skills to my field.

Growth of Self as a Project Developer

My education previous to starting my doctoral journey was Art Education and Art History, and I truly had no experience in developing a project or where to even begin the process. In my opinion, my first writings were very poor quality. With the help and encouragement of my committee chair, I wrote and rewrote each section with continual improvement. I also began to read several other research projects that helped me understand the expectations of writing a quality project. I would often become very frustrated and overwhelmed when I received my work back with what seemed to be an abundance of changes that needed to be made. In time, I realized that it was these comments and recommendations that helped me grow as a project developer. Each time I made a change, added a citation, or edited my writing to reflect scholarly writing, I was making forward progress towards developing a quality project.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

I think the importance of this project was identifying the supports students needed in the EST program so that enrollment could be increased. It was important for teachers and the administration to understand the specific needs and supports that students needed so that the EST program could be a tool for them to use that could help them achieve their educational goals. The data collected will be presented to EST program teachers and

administrators, and the results of the findings could help improve student achievement and success. Identifying the needs of the students will help EST administrators develop programs and offer additional supports to students who need help with child care, transportation, tuition, and flexibility. This project can help improve the quality of life for students and their families by continuing to provide quality educational programming for

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

This project has the potential to be successful in increasing enrollment among the EST program as well as other similar OST programs throughout the upper Midwest region. After analyzing the difficulties students, teachers, and administrator of the EST program face, I believe that the recommended changes to the EST program will help facilitate communication between students, teachers, and administrators and will offer the additional supports needed for students to be successful. Implementation of these changes will have a positive effect on the EST program and enrollment may increase. Further implications of the study may increase student graduation, GED completion, and college entrance, which will also have a positive impact on the local and regional communities.

While conducting research and reading articles that supported my project, I did not find significant data that offered solutions to the problem of declining enrollment. Future research was necessary to support OST programs that offered additional educational resources to at risk students. High school graduation and GED completion are necessary for student to enroll in college and receive training to compete in a competitive job market. As researchers, we need to dedicate time and resources that will

support students in their educational goals. I believe this study has the potential to be a resource for similar OST programs that offer support to at risk students.

Conclusion

As a former coordinator for the EST program, I had a personal interest in the declining enrollment as I saw the effects that it had on student achievement. I recognized the importance of analyzing data and presenting the data from the participants in a PD program for the faculty and staff of the EST program. A PD program was selected because it seemed the most effective medium to educate and connect faculty and staff with resources that would benefit the EST program. The most important purpose of this project was to identify the possible reasons that enrollment was declining among the EST program and to offer a solution to help remedy the problem. I believe that the EST program should use my PD program that I developed so that students enrolled in the EST program will have the opportunity to achieve educational success. I think that this project will have a positive effect on the lives of the students enrolled in the EST program by providing practical suggestions on how to increase enrollment in the EST program so this program will continue as a relevant and current resource for students.

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Appendix A: The Project

Professional Development Program Faculty/Staff Training Program Workshop First Day (8 hours)

Keynote Speakers:

Keynote speaker #1 and keynote speaker #2 have 40 years of combined experience in the field of education and OST programming. Keynote speaker #1 has a MA in education and has worked with youth and adults for 18 years, specializing in at risk students. In addition to being an educator, he has extensive experience in admissions and enrollment. Keynote speaker #2 has a MA in communication and 22 years' experience as a director for an OST program. In addition, he has extensive grant writing and scholarship application experience.

Learning Objectives

At the end of the first day of training, faculty and staff will:

- Understand, recognize, and know what the specific needs of the students in the EST program are that relate to declining enrollment.
- Be able to articulate the perceptions of students, teachers, and administrators in regards to declining enrollment
- Be able to understand how to identify potential financial resources for the EST program
- Understand the process involved in collaboration, effective communication, and student interaction

Agenda

- Introduction and welcome from facilitator
- Keynote speaker #1
- Break
- Small group discussions
- Keynote speaker #2
- Lunch
- Small group discussion
- Small group exercises

- Break
- Facilitator led open discussion/questions

Training Materials

- Set up three square tables for four participants at each table
- Agenda (14)
- Name tags (14)
- Pens and paper for 12 participants
- Smart board
- Laptop computer
- Internet access

8:00 am – 9:00 am	Introduction and Welcome from Facilitator and Review of First Day's Agenda Faculty and staff introductions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name and position within EST • Educational background • What do you hope to learn from this workshop? The facilitator will provide an overview of the first day of the training and the purpose of the training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions of declining enrollment • Student needs • Available resources
9:00 am – 10:00 am	Keynote Speaker #1: Introduction to Out of School Time (OST) programs and key issues they are facing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion on the purpose and mission of OST programs. • Learning how to identify and address student needs. • Building healthy relationships with students. • Identifying and attaining financial resources.
10:00 am – 10:15 am	Break
10:15 am – 11:00 am	Small Group Discussion and Open Discussion.

	<p>Each small group will consist of four participants; teachers and administrators. One participant will be asked to take notes as the following questions are asked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the most interesting part of the presentation? • Do you feel that the suggestions made were viable options for you as a teacher/administrator? • Do you feel that the presenter offered valuable information for the EST program? <p>Small groups will each present their observations to the whole group and proceed with an open discussion on their perceptions.</p>
11:00 am – 12:00 pm	<p>Keynote Speaker #2:</p> <p>The keynote speaker will build upon the information from the 1st keynote speaker and discuss specific resources that are designed for OST programs and at risk students. Ron will discuss how to search and apply for the following funding sources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pinehill Scholarship • Merritt funding for at risk students • Teen Parent • Jan Hill Scholarship
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm	Lunch Break
1:00 pm – 1:45 pm	<p>Small Group Discussion</p> <p>Each small group will consist of four participants; teachers and administrators. One participant will be asked to take notes as the following questions are asked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the most interesting part of the presentation? • Do you feel that the suggestions made were viable options for you as a teacher/administrator? • Do you feel that the presenter offered valuable information for the EST program?

	Small groups will each present their observations to the whole group and proceed with an open discussion on their perceptions.
1:45 pm – 2:45 pm	<p>Small Group Exercises</p> <p>Small groups will consist of four participants in each group, composed of teachers and administrators.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive exercise on effective communication • Interactive exercise on perceptions • Interactive exercise on interactions
2:45 pm- 3:00 pm	Break
3:00 pm – 3:45 pm	<p>Facilitator Led Questions and Open Discussion</p> <p>The facilitator will moderate a discussion for the faculty and staff. Faculty and staff will have the opportunity to discuss the presentations and events of the day. The facilitator will encourage open discussion, reflection, and thoughts and ideas in regards to the EST program as it moves forward.</p>
3:45 pm – 4:00 pm	<p>Recap</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recap for the day • Dismiss for the day

Session 1 Training Power Point Slides 1-2

Declining Enrollment Among EST Courses

Training Session 1

Facilitator: Keynote Speaker #1 and Keynote Speaker #2

Objectives

- Understand, recognize, and know what the specific needs of the students in the EST program are that relate to declining enrollment.
- Be able to articulate the perceptions of students, teachers, and administrators in regards to declining enrollment
- Be able to understand how to identify potential financial resources for the EST program
- Understand the process involved in collaboration, effective communication, and student interaction

Session 1 Training Power Point Slides 2-3

What are the needs of the EST program?

- Increased finances
- Additional funding
- Increased student support
- Child care
- Transportation
- Convenience

Perceptions of students, teachers, and administrators

- What are the perceptions
- How do we address the prevailing issues
- Collaboration with outside sources

Session 1 Training Power Point Slides 4-5

Potential financial resources

- Grants
- Community partners
- Fundraising
- State funding

Collaboration

- How do we work together for a common goal
- Learning how to communicate to achieve results
- Finding community partners
- Continuing education

Effective communication

- Being an active listener
- Non-verbal cues
- Reading body language
- Empathetic listening

Student interaction

- Emotional support
- Positive climate
- Teacher sensitivity
- Response to student perspectives
- Productivity
- Quality of feedback

Professional Development Program Faculty/Staff Training Program Workshop Second Day (8 hours)

Keynote Speaker:

Keynote speaker is the director of a local academy serving at risk youth. He has a MA in education, and 25 years' experience working with at risk students and teen parents. Keynote speaker has extensive training in effective communication and students support. Further expertise includes management of successful programs for at risk students.

Learning Objectives

At the end of the second day of training, faculty and staff will:

- Be aware of the early warning signs of at risk students
- Know how to implement intervention techniques for at risk students
- Know how to listen effectively to student needs
- Be aware of student support strategies and how to use them effectively

Agenda

- Introduction and welcome from facilitator
- Keynote speaker
- Break
- Small group discussions
- Active participation exercises
- Lunch
- Tour Merrit Alternative Education Facility
- Break
- Facilitator led open discussion/questions

Training Materials

- Set up three square tables for four participants at each table

- Agenda (14)
- Name tags (14)
- Pens and paper for 12 participants
- Smart board
- Laptop computer
- Internet access
- Transportation vehicle

8:00 am – 9:30 am	<p>Facilitator Review of Second Day Agenda/Keynote speaker</p> <p>Facilitator will review the agenda for the second day of training; keynote speaker will transition from the first day of training to the fundamentals of reaching at risk students. Key focus points of the discussion are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective listening • How to recognize at risk students • How to reach at risk students • Techniques and training in student support
9:30 am – 9:45 am	Break
9:45 am – 10:45 am	<p>Small Group Discussions</p> <p>Each small group will consist of four participants: teachers and administrators. One participant will be asked to take notes as the following questions are asked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the most interesting part of the presentation? • Do you feel that the suggestions made were viable options for you as a teacher/administrator? • Do you feel that the presenter offered valuable information for the EST program? <p>Small groups will each present their observations to the whole group and proceed with an open discussion on their perceptions.</p>
10:45 am – 12:00 pm	<p>Small Group Exercises in Effective Listening and Identifying at Risk Students</p>

	<p>Small groups will consist of four participants in each group, composed of teachers and administrators. Exercises Will Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive exercises on Effective Listening • Interactive Exercises on Identifying at Risk Students <p>Participants will learn techniques from a hands on approach and interactive exercises designed to educate teachers and administrators.</p>
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm	Lunch
1:00 pm – 2:45 pm	<p>Tour Merrit Alternative Education Facility</p> <p>Participants will be transported to the Merrit Education Facility for a guided tour. The tour will be led by Blake Liven and will include a full tour of the building and services it offers.</p>
2:45 pm – 3:00 pm	Break
3:00 pm – 3:45 pm	<p>Facilitator led open discussion/questions</p> <p>The facilitator will moderate a discussion for the faculty and staff. Faculty and staff will have the opportunity to discuss the presentations and events of the day. The facilitator will encourage open discussion, reflection, and thoughts and ideas in regards to the EST program as it moves forward. The facilitator will help lead a discussion about the Merrit Education Facility practices and services offered.</p>
3:45 pm – 4:00 pm	<p>Recap</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recap for the day • Dismiss for the day

Session 2 Training Power Point Slides 1-2

At risk students

- Who is at risk
- Warning signs
- Helping at risk students

Characteristics for risk

- Family and personal background characteristics
- Amount of parental involvement in the student's education
- Student's academic history
- Student behavioral factors
- Teacher perceptions of the student
- Characteristics of the student's school.

Session 2 Training Power Point Slides 3-4

Warning signs

- Social withdrawal
- Feelings of isolation
- Feelings of rejection
- Victim of violence
- Feelings of being picked on or persecuted
- Low school interest
- Poor academic performance

Helping at risk students

- Caring, Sustained Relationships
- Reachable Goals
- Realistic, Hopeful Pathways
- Engaging School and Community Settings

Session 2 Training Power Point Slides 5-6

Intervention Techniques

- Basic directions or instructions
- Peer support
- Modified assignments
- Increased one to one time
- Hands on assignments

Listening effectively to student needs

- Don't interrupt
- Don't change the subject
- Listen, don't rehearse
- Don't interrogate
- Don't preach
- Don't talk down

Session 2 Training Power Point Slides 7-8

Student support strategies

- Inclusion strategies
- Academic support strategies

Inclusion strategies

- Establish prior knowledge of student
- Proceed from the simple to the complex
- Use a step-by-step approach
- Teaching in small bites
- Practice and repetition
- Think about possible accommodations and modifications needed
- Teach to strengths
- Concentrate on the individual
- Provide opportunities for success to build self-esteem
- Give positives before negatives
- Vary types of instruction and assessment
- Establish a classroom environment that encourages students to ask questions and become actively involved in their learning.

Session 2 Training Power Point Slide 9-10

Academic support strategies

- Collaboration between Students (Peer Collaboration)
- Collaboration between Classroom Instructors and Academic-Support Services
- Collaboration between the Divisions of Academic and Student Affairs
- Collaboration between Colleges and Schools

Peer support for academic success

- Peer tutoring
- Peer mentoring
- Peer study groups
- Cooperative learning groups
- Think and pair

Professional Development Program Faculty/Staff Training Program Workshop Third Day (8 hours)

Keynote Speaker:

Keynote speaker has 30 years' experience as a grant writer for a local non-profit agency serving young adults. The speaker has wrote extensive successful grants for several non-profit agencies in the area. His expertise includes: researching grants, applying for grants and fundamentals of successful grant writing. Keynote speaker is also an advocate for at risk students.

Learning Objectives

At the end of the third day of training, faculty and staff will:

- Understand the process of grant writing
- Gain experience in grant writing
- Understand how to research and locate available grants
- Understand the process of fundraising

Agenda

- Introduction and welcome from facilitator
- Keynote speaker
- Break
- Small group discussions
- Mock grant writing exercises
- Lunch
- Mock Fundraisers
- Break
- Facilitator led open discussion/questions
- End of training survey

Training Materials

- Set up three square tables for four participants at each table
- Agenda (14)
- Name tags (14)

- Pens and paper for 12 participants
- Smart board
- Laptop computer (3)
- Internet access
- Surveys (12)

8:00 am – 10:00 am	<p>Facilitator Review of Third Day Agenda/Keynote speaker</p> <p>Facilitator will review the agenda for the third day of training. Keynote speaker will discuss the fundamentals of grant writing and fundraising. Topics will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to research grants • Effective grant writing • Fundamentals of fundraising • Ethics and regulations
10:00 am – 10:15 am	Break
10:15 am – 11:00 am	<p>Small Group Discussions</p> <p>Each small group will consist of four participants; teachers and administrators. One participant will be asked to take notes as the following questions are asked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the most interesting part of the presentation? • Do you feel that the suggestions made were viable options for you as a teacher/administrator? • Do you feel that the presenter offered valuable information for the EST program? <p>Small groups will each present their observations to the whole group and proceed with an open discussion on their perceptions.</p>
11:00 am – 12:00 pm	<p>Mock Grant Writing</p> <p>Participants will break into three small groups with four members in each group. The key note speaker will lead the group through a hands on process of researching grants using the laptops provided. Keynote speaker will answer questions as needed while the participants locate grants and use the skills learned in the session to begin writing a mock grant proposal. This exercise will help participants of the training become familiar with grants and the process of grant writing.</p>

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm	Lunch
1:00 pm – 2:45 pm	<p>Mock Fundraising</p> <p>Participants will break into three groups of four and will be guided by the keynote speaker through various fundraising opportunities. Participants will have the opportunity to work together to research potential fundraisers and become familiar with the process and benefits it could have for the EST program. The keynote speaker will be available to answer questions and help guide participants through the process.</p>
2:45 pm – 3:00 pm	Break
3:00 pm – 3:45 pm	<p>Facilitator led open discussion/questions</p> <p>The facilitator will moderate a discussion for the faculty and staff. Faculty and staff will have the opportunity to discuss the presentations and events of the day. The facilitator will encourage open discussion, reflection, and thoughts and ideas in regards to the EST program as it moves forward. The facilitator will help lead a discussion about grant writing and fundraising and how it may be helpful to the EST program.</p>
3:45 pm – 4:00 pm	<p>Recap</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recap for the day • Complete surveys • Closing

Session 3 Training Power Point Slides 1-2

Understanding grant writing**1. Define your project**

- Clarify the purpose of your project and write a mission statement
- Define the scope of work to focus your funding search
- Determine the broad project goals
- Identify the specific objectives that define how you will focus the work to accomplish those goals

2. Identify the right funding sources

- Foundation center
- Computerized databases
- Publications
- Public libraries

Session 3 Training Power Point Slides 3-4

3. Contact the funders

- Funder as a resource
- Identify a project officer
- Ask for technical assistance
- Ask how proposals are reviewed and decisions made
- Ask about budgetary requirements and preferences
- Ask if matching funds are required

4. Acquire proposal guidelines

- Submission deadlines
- Eligibility
- Proposal format
- Review timetable
- Budgets
- Funding goals and priorities
- Award levels
- Evaluation process and criteria
- Whom to contact
- Submission requirements

Session 3 Training Power Point Slides 5-6

5. Know the submission deadline

- Plan to submit your proposal on or before the deadline
- Be realistic about whether you have time to prepare a competitive proposal that meets the deadline
- Know the funder's policies on late submissions, exceptions, and mail delays
- Find out how the funder will notify you about the receipt and status of your proposal

6. Determine personnel needs

- Identify required personnel
- Contact project consultants, trainers, and other auxiliary personnel to seek availability
- Acquire permission to include members in the project
- Negotiate compensation Update your timeline.

Session 3 Training Power Point Slides 7-8

1. Writing the proposal

- Structure
- Attention to specifications
- Concise persuasive writing
- A reasonable budget

Standard proposal components

- The narrative
- Budget
- Appendix of support material
- Authorized signature

Session 3 Training Power Point Slides 9-10

Supplemental materials

- Abstracts
- Summaries
- Explanation of budget items
- Certifications.

2. Narratives

- Statement of need
- Approach
- Credentials
- Project timeline
- Method of evaluation

Session 3 Training Power Point Slides 11-12

Does the narrative answer these questions?

- What do we want
- What concern will be addressed and why
- Who will benefit and how
- What specific objectives can be accomplished and how
- How will results be measured
- How does this funding request relate to the funders purpose, objectives, and priorities
- Who are we
- How do we qualify to meet this need

3. Budgets concerns

- Can the job be accomplished with this budget
- Are costs reasonable for the market
- Are costs too high
- Are costs too low
- Is the budget consistent with proposed activities
- Is there sufficient budget detail and explanation?

Session 3 Training Power Point Slide 13

4. Submission checklist and guidelines**The proposal should be:**

- Neat
- Complete
- On time
- Correct amount of copies
- Authorized signatures
- Indicate required documents
- Address the proposal as directed in the guidelines
- Include required documentation.

Please rate how strongly you agree/disagree with the following statements	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
I can use the strategies I learned from the training in my workplace				
The training was engaging and informative				
My perceptions and thought process was enhanced from the training				
Training will be easily implemented in the EST program				
The subject matter was presented in a manner that I understood				
I feel confident in my ability to implement the strategies that I learned in the training				
I have learned the cause of declining enrollment among the EST program				

What part of the training did you feel was most effective?

What part of the training did you feel was least effective?